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of Letters



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RENASCENCE

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Shape of the Lightning: Randall Jarrell

By C. E. MAGUIRE

THERE used to be a comic strip about a demon child whose parents preferred manners to morals, and would, at the height of some act of arson or assault, admonish her gently with: "Gertrude, don't *point*." But the art of pointing (not the same thing as the *ars pungendi*) has lately been brought into good standing by Randall Jarrell, who not only defiantly uses it in his own criticism but philosophizes about it. He makes another Gertrude, the egregious novelist of his *Pictures from an Institution*, call it "definition by ostentation." Gertrude, talking with the "I" of the novel, a poet who is obviously Jarrell himself, "said, rather mockingly but rather good-humoredly, that it was just the thing for me. 'How do you do it?' I asked. She answered: 'You simply point.' 'That *is* just the thing for me,' I admitted. I felt that definition by ostentation was almost as good as none. To Gertrude a definition by ostentation was almost as bad as none. . . . To her the world was one of those stupid riddles whose only point is that they have no point. It was a knot she could not untie; and she was not willing, as many people are, to pretend that she could. . . ."

Jarrell, speaking through Gertrude Johnson, here points to his own point. He does not pretend to untie knots. He merely looks at them, sometimes, as in the novel and the criticism, mockingly; always good-humoredly; and often, especially in the poems, tenderly. But he knows that he cannot untie them, and refuses to pretend he can. He draws your attention to them, and feels that he can do no more. This is not to say that he lacks a sense of duty. In "The Obscurity of the Poet," he says: ". . . we have believed that, if we know the truth, the truth will set us free; art is indispensable because so much of this truth can be learned through works of art and through works of art alone—for which of us could have learned for himself what Proust and Chekhov, Hardy and Yeats and Rilke, Shakespeare and Homer learned for us? . . . those differing and contradictory truths which seem nevertheless, to the mind which contains them, in some sense a single truth? And all these things, by their very nature, demand to be shared; if we are satisfied to know these things ourselves, and to look with superiority or indifference at those who do not have that knowledge, we have made a refusal that corrupts us as surely as anything can." Any close reading of his work shows that this is no lofty theorizing. He believes it, and he works—slaves, practically—at this sharing, at saving himself

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from this corruption. I say "slaves" because he works himself up into a verbal frenzy in the attempt to clarify what he has seen and to follow his own advice: "write so as to be of some use to a reader." He is speaking here to critics, whom he also reminds that they can "never be more than the staircase to the monument, the guide to the gallery, the telescope through which the children see the stars." But he never forgets this himself whether he writes as critic and the monument is the work criticized; or as novelist, leading his reader through a gallery of people (not *characters*); and, as poet, drawing our gaze to the sky of "those unknown laws which we have obeyed," he says after Proust, "because we bore their precepts in our hearts, knowing not whose hand had traced them there—those laws which . . . are invisible only—and still!—to fools."

He does not lack a sense of duty. In refusing to pretend to untie knots he merely wishes to emphasize that they are essentially untie-able, and to warn the reader to suspect anyone who pretends to untie them. He speaks, in his article on Ransom, of "a man who has seen through everything except the process of seeing through everything," and it is hard to escape the impression—not in this context merely, but in his work to date as a whole—that he is irritated by the attempt to see through anything. One can easily sympathize with his irritation. Its real object is the enemy of mystery, the man who tries to treat other men as scientists treat things. Gertrude is the finished type (although he can be tender even with her) and in her we see the terrible end of all such: "In her analysis of human conduct there was a crude kind of economic, psychoanalytic determinism. She knew that there were good reasons and real reasons and that the two never coincide." Flo Whittaker, that "kind and selfless and ludicrous" woman, is lovingly pictured, but clearly exasperating. "She was as public-spirited as the sun . . . after she had talked to you a while you almost doubted that you existed, except in some statistical sense . . ." *Causes* were her main interest in life: ". . . to her what you voted at or gave for or read about in the *Nation* was real life."

This, says Jarrell, is what happens when you try to untie knots. If you are decent, you turn into a Flo Whittaker; if you are not, you turn into a Gertrude Johnson. Why?—because, evidently, if you try to dissect and classify man, you must proceed according to a system which is based on some doctrine, and Jarrell will have none of doctrine as he will have none of Authority. His highest praise of Robert Lowell's "Mother Marie Therese," which he calls "the best poem Mr. Lowell has ever written," is that "it is warped neither by Doctrine nor by that doctrine which each of us becomes for himself." In the same way, he approves Ransom's escape from "that traumatic passion for Authority, any Authority at all, that is one of the most unpleasant things in our particular time and our particular culture." Again he likes William Carlos Williams' "real

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and unusual dislike of, distrust in, Authority." The "Father-Surrogate of the average work of art has been banished from his Eden."

JARRELL as critic in *Poetry and the Age* does not damn any poet for possessing a system or following an Authority. His earlier essay on Robert Lowell ("From the Kingdom of Necessity") makes this clear; but it also makes clear that he regards the possession of a doctrine as a poetical hazard, which Lowell has, by some grace or other, avoided. Lowell's Christianity, he insists, is not of the ordinary type. It is not "the belief in the necessity of belief." The usual Catholic convert, unlike Lowell, "distrusts freedom as much as he needs bondage . . . sees the world as a liberal chaos which can be ordered and redeemed only by that rigid and final Authority to Whom men submit without question." Lowell is an "heretical enthusiast," and Jarrell thinks that his phrase "St. Peter, the distorted key" "is likely to be appreciated outside the church and overlooked inside it, *ad maiorem gloriam* of Catholic poetry." (Here, as in his reading of Frost's "Neither Far Out Nor In Deep," to which I shall refer later, he tends to distort a fairly clear meaning to fit his own view.) Lowell has wanted to "escape into" freedom, not flee from it, he says; but "by a very strange route." The poems, however, have "retained . . . a good deal of the menacing sternness of Authority as such." Despite this, Lowell's Catholicism can be useful in writing poetry because it is "essentially literary, anthropomorphic, emotional," and "it is an advantage to a poet to have a frame of reference, terms of generalization, which are themselves human, affective, and effective as literature." For this purpose, Catholicism "regardless of whether it is true, false, or absurd," is much more useful, he thinks, than science. It is an advantage to have one of the "pre-scientific ideologies like Christianity or Marxism." But it is an advantage which the poet "can well forego." He quotes Lowell's line about Bernadette's vision which "puts out reason's eyes," and comments severely: "It does indeed."

All this is in line with an attitude of Jarrell's which explains much of his criticism as well as his imaginative writing. The content of this attitude is familiar: he "refuses to climb aboard any of the monumental certainties that go perpetually by, perpetually on time"; but it is not a churlish or a cynical refusal. It is alive, open, sympathetic (the comment about a vision's putting out reason's eyes is uncharacteristically sharp) and, in the poems at least, almost anguished. If he is, doctrinally, an unreconstructed rebel, it is because he has inherited a tradition of rebellion so respectably established that a counter-rebellion toward doctrine might be almost too quixotic. Not that he would object to being quixotic. But in his prose moments, the moments when he is one with the age of criticism he deplores, he is in agreement with Louis Kronenberger's praise of skeptical humanism, without which, Kronenberger

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says, "there can really be no civilization at all." And the tradition of skeptical humanism, Kronenberger feels, must survive as the leaven in our world (or our country, at any rate) for it is "at variance with a people who love panaceas, and formulas, and solutions, and absolutions, and reassuring answers." These attract because they are a release from ultimate responsibility, from the existentialists' tragic freedom; but like Bernadette's vision, they put out reason's eyes.

Having renounced (or perhaps better: accepted his ancestral renunciation of) such monumental certainties, what does Jarrell substitute?—for no negation, no renunciation-without-regret-or-sublimation can be the basis of such good poetry and such a good novel as he has already given us. The answer is best approached by saying that he is essentially a poet rather than a critic or a novelist; and that if poetry is not his substitute for religion, his opinions about poetry and his self-revelation in his poems are the clearest clue to what he believes—or in some cases, tries not to believe.

TWO approaches to poetry he specifically deplors. In writing of Wallace Stevens, whom he calls "one of the true poets of our century," he begins with a quotation from Stendhal: "He was reduced to philosophizing." The habit of philosophizing in poetry, he insists, "has been unfortunate for Stevens," because "poetry is a bad medium for philosophy." By "philosophy," he does not designate a content but a process. To philosophize—at least in this context—means for him to think of particulars "as primarily illustrations of general truths." But surely, he protests, for the poet "it is always the generalization whose life is derived, whose authority is delegated." He quotes Goethe: "It makes a great difference whether the poet seeks the particular in relation to the universal or contemplates the universal in the particular." The second seeking "represents the very nature of poetry. He who grasps this particular as living essence also encompasses the universal." When Stevens says of his *Supreme Fiction* that "it must be *abstract*," the reader (Jarrell) remembers that "even Hegel called it a *concrete* universal." But he is also exasperated at the imagists who changed "the subject of poetry . . . from the actions of men to the reactions of poets—reactions being defined in a way that left the poet almost without motor system or cerebral cortex. This easily led to a kind of abstraction: for what is more abstract than a fortuitous collocation of sensations?"

In all these criticisms he is following a single principle, expressed positively in his generous tributes (developed mainly through definition by ostentation) to his favorites: to Whitman, Frost, William Carlos Williams, and Marianne Moore, and to Lowell and Stevens at their best. He even metaphorically defines the poet: "A good poet is someone who manages, in a life time of standing out in thunder storms, to be struck by lightning five or six times; a dozen or two

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dozen times and he is great." But what are these thunder storms whose lightning is so benign? To what does the would-be poet hopefully expose himself? And even then, how does he make himself a conductor rather than only a victim of the shafts?

The poet exposes himself to what Jarrell calls the "thinginess of things," and even more, if we can judge both by what he writes and what he praises, to the humanness of human beings. But mere reportage is not enough. If we merely "bring our data back alive," as he says Williams sometimes does, we have either not been struck at all or failed to be conductors. We are either pretenders—conscious or unconscious—or bad technicians. We lack either insight or the power to organize. The second lack may be a sign of—*i.e.* the result of—the first. What he praises in Marianne Moore's verse is its "tone of much wit and precision and intelligence, of irony and forbearance, of unusual moral penetration"; he finds her "*the* poet of the particular . . . and also *the* poet of general moral statement." Her preoccupation is with Things, Plants, Animals, but she has "transformed the Animal Kingdom, that amoral realm, into a realm of good." Nature, in her poll of it, "is overwhelmingly in favor of morality." And this bothers him.

All this appreciation of moral insight in verse partly explains the nature of the poetic lightning. "Effective realities of human behavior and desire" are the poet's subject matter, but it is ineffective to discuss them in terms of "adrenalin and the thalamus," or "lack of sanitary facilities." What must strike the poet is, so far as I can see, an intuition of pattern which supports a conviction of value. Such abstract paraphrase may well seem to Jarrell, in his own words, of the type "written by a syndicate of encyclopedias for an audience of International Business Machines." But it will have, temporarily, to serve, for it has in it the necessary elements: that conviction of values in human life which is so vibrant in Jarrell's imaginative work; and the almost painful seeking for something to support the conviction, together with a protectively ironic resignation to the suspicion that such support is only illusory. As usual, the word "values" is irritatingly ambiguous (not fruitfully so) because what it points at, what the yearner for values really yearns for, is ultimate value. We have to ask—and to ask under Jarrell's probably accusing eye—1) does he believe in an ultimate value? and 2) if so, what is it? My answer, roughly and rashly, is that 1) he would like to, and 2) he isn't sure. He seems almost sure that there isn't one, and that it is a mid-Victorian or a medieval or a modern bourgeois weakness to hope there is. Still, that is what his work as a whole means, so far; and his style, his completely delightful, conversational, Roman candle style which has caught something from the lightning to which he has not ineffectively exposed himself—this ironic, ambiguous, allusive, wise-

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cracking style, is both a mask for and (as a style always is) a revelation of, his complex state of mind.

His criticism of style in others also reveals something of himself. He treats, if he does not define, style as, in Wimsatt's formulation, a "last and most detailed elaboration of meaning"; and what interests him most in style is organization. Now organization is not fortuitous, cannot safely be guided by the mere technique or trend of a school, is not even—like diction and tone of voice—determined by the language tastes or by the temperament of the writer. It depends, surely, on the shape or pattern of the writer's understanding of his material; on the line, straight or jagged, which the bolt striking him has burned into him; and the more important the material, the closer its relation to the ultimate value which may or may not exist, the more sharply accurate and appropriate must the organization be. Jarrell wants organization always, and rightly rejects formlessness as emptiness; but he wants organization to be "surprising." He wants, he says, to be "startled." Any getting set in a manner or mannerism irks him, even in the poets he likes best, in Frost, and in Lowell, and in Marianne Moore, for his admirations are never blind.

He refers to five kinds of organization: the logical, the narrative, the dramatic, the mosaic, and the thematic or musical, the last being a development of the mosaic. "Mosaic" is his word for imagist organization, and implies rather lack of organization. Three of his favorite poets, Stevens, Williams, and Marianne Moore, were trained in the imagist school whose aim he describes: "the poet was supposed to see everything, to feel a great deal, and to think and to do and to make hardly anything." It has, ideally, he says, "a pure, crystalline inconsequence." The road of escape his three poets took suggests the qualities he prefers. Stevens, he says, has a passion for order (he also says "philosophy," but here evidently not in the pejorative sense); Marianne Moore added to the imagist formula "moral judgment, feeling, and generalization"; Williams added his "boyish delight and trust in Things," and an empathy as opposed to imagist objectivity. These, then, are antidotes for inconsequence: order, moral judgment, generalization, delight and trust and identification with Things, or, as happens more often in Jarrell's own writing, with people. The thematic or musical organization is that in "Four Quartets" ("probably the best poem by a living poet") and in "Coriolan," and Jarrell does not discuss it except to point out that "Paterson" uses it. The insistence on organization, but on a startling organization, shows his dislike of "inconsequence," and confirms both his objection to fixed systems, and his demand for fidelity to the lines of the original lightning flash. If lightning does not strike twice in the same place, it also presumably does not twice leave the same impress.

(Continued in the next issue)

Madame Swetchine's Salon

BY DOROTHY POULAIN

IN THE heart of the Faubourg St. Germain, behind a high and thick wall freshened with creamy paint, one can glimpse a comfortable old house once famous for its salon and its chapel. According to Madame Swetchine's instructions, the chapel was removed after her death, but the apartment in which she lived has little changed since she came from her native Russia to live here in the early 1800's.

For more than thirty years the old courtyard's doorway, topped by a sculpted shell, opened wide to admit the social, political, literary and religious élite of Europe. Among the many who frequented this salon, which a contemporary has called "une maison de charité à l'usage des gens du monde," were three young men whose influence marked the course of religious life in France in the nineteenth century: Lacordaire, Montalembert, and Dom Guéranger.

They came here, like so many others, for the wise counsel and affectionate encouragement of the salon's presiding genius: a rather short, stout woman with a slight squint in one eye, somewhat brusque in her movements, but possessing an exceptional intelligence and a prodigious culture matched only by her kindness of heart and her desire to serve. Of the varied forms her service took we have evidence in the many volumes of her published correspondence. But perhaps only those who directly experienced it, like de Tocqueville or the young, tormented Lacordaire, could properly describe a certain quality in her—a warm layer of humanity that fell like a mantle on chilly shoulders.

Sophie Petrovna Soïmonov (who became Madame Swetchine) was born on November 22, 1788, in the old Moscow of Catherine the Great. Her cultured and distinguished parents wished their child to receive an education appropriate to that age of encyclopedic learning. So one began with the languages: Russian, Slavonic (for the Liturgy), Latin, Greek, some Hebrew, the all-important French (spoken almost exclusively in educated circles), German, English, and Italian. These were the keys to open the realm of ancient and modern history, literature, philosophy, music, art, and the sciences. All her life Sophie retained a keen interest in chemistry.

One wonders what feat of pedagogical magic succeeded in achieving this without transforming the youngster into a pedantic monster. She developed a vast curiosity and a love of study, reading always with a pen in hand. First came a resumé of her reading; next an analysis of it; and lastly her reflections

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on the subject. These notes would then be copied for future reference into a series of *Cabiers*, of which thirty-five remain. This method fixed the bulk of the material in her memory. After her mother died Sophie supervised the education of her young sister, Catherine. This sister later became the Princess Gagarin, aunt of Father Gagarin, a convert to Catholicism and founder of the French Jesuit review, *Etudes*.

BEFORE her marriage at the age of seventeen to General Swetchine, an excellent husband though many years her senior, Sophie had been a maid of honor to the Empress Marie Feodorovna, wife of the Emperor Paul. In 1800 the General who had been military commander of the Imperial Palace was named military governor of Petersburg, which post he held until his refusal to take part in the assassination of the Czar. So it was in the court circles and salons of the capitol, filled with emigrés of the French Revolution, that the brilliant young woman first became aware of "another" Christian Church. One of its most illustrious representatives was Joseph de Maistre, then Sardinian Ambassador to Petersburg, though the dignity and discretion necessary in his diplomatic post made proselytizing unthinkable. While she admired his mind and was aware of his personal convictions and writings, they had little influence on Madame Swetchine at this period.

It is more likely that the arrival of the Jesuits in 1801 had more far-reaching effects. These priests were to serve the four Catholic nations they represented: France, Poland, Italy, and Germany. Immediately a number of families, wishing to give their children the benefit of instruction from such learned men, begged them to open a parish school. Although Madame Swetchine had no children, her good friend, the Princess Alexis Galitzine, had sons and nephews who were sent to the classes. Other families of her acquaintance—the Tolstoy, the Stroganov, the Bariatski, and the Rostopchine—also sent their children. It was in the Galitzine family that the first conversions took place, though that of the Princess Alexis long remained a secret. For Orthodoxy being the state religion and inextricably welded to the national life, to abjure the one was as if to betray the other.

OBSERVING, questioning, reflecting across the years that included the war of 1812 and the religious revival that followed, Madame Swetchine, now thirty-three, arrived at a period of crisis. "Where is the truth?" she cried. Determined to find it, and convinced that it lay exclusively in the Eastern Church, she decided to make an exhaustive study that would restore her peace of mind. With extraordinary lucidity she saw that the essential difficulties lay in historic facts rather than issues of dogma. So, to disprove the claims of papal authority and Roman supremacy, it would be necessary to confront the documents on which the Roman claims were based. But where to find them?

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The best material she could consult under the circumstances was the somewhat mediocre and slightly outmoded *Histoire Ecclésiastique* of the Abbé de Fleury in thirty-six volumes. Despite a precarious state of health, she accepted this challenge, the thought of which perturbed even de Maistre. Needing seclusion and solitude for such an undertaking, she accepted an invitation from Prince Bariatinski to visit his country place on the Gulf of Finland.

With her went Nadine, the General's illegitimate daughter whom the couple had adopted; a trunkful of books, including St. Paul, Bolingbroke and Bossuet (for whom she developed a life-long cult); and, of course, her pen and reams of paper.

Unlike the Damascus Road, this Russian's road to Rome was unmarked by dazzling illumination. Six months of advances and retreats are recorded in the *Journal de la Conversion*. This poignant account, which she calls "a monument of vacillations," is spun in her fine, compact style throughout the 450 pages of her thirteenth *Cahier*. The Count de Falloux, her literary heir and first biographer declared, "The fabric of this work is too tightly woven to allow one to detach fragments from it; but perhaps the volume as a whole could one day be published and dedicated to the entire Russian nation."

In this ninth centenary of the Great Schism of the Orient, certain passages assume significance:

If ever anyone in the world desired to remain Greek (Orthodox) in all conscience and after an examination in proportion to his forces I can say that it was I. . . . The conversion that my mind has just undergone is setting my natural aversions at grips with invincible demonstrations; it is compromising my existence, afflicting my pride, disturbing my heart by all the desertions which threaten, and yet an unknown sweetness, boundless, full of charm and suavity, dominates all my impressions. . . . One does not choose the truth; it imposes itself on the free-will. . . . Ah, my God, if from now on it were *Your* will to give the world the magnificent and touching spectacle of Christians reunited in one and the same faith and in one and the same hope! If, at least, the two Churches, after having ceased to be united, without having ceased to be sisters, were to reunite!

On her return to Petersburg Madame Swetchine at once sought Father Rozaven, spiritual advisor to the Catholics there, and confided her decision to him. But in these last months of 1815, especially since the hue and cry raised by the spectacular conversion of the Galitzine boy, much prudence was necessary since the priests were under surveillance. It is generally believed that the abjuration was made in the strictest secrecy, in the carriage in which Madame Swetchine had driven to bring Father Rozaven to the bedside of a dying man. Shortly afterwards, Czar Alexander returned from the Congress of Vienna. He was immediately approached by the Metropolitan, the Minister of Cults,

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and others pouring out their grievances against the Jesuits. An ukase was then signed for expulsion of the Jesuits.

The possible influence of the new "convert" on the Czar was feared by those who had resented the General's attitude at the time of the Emperor Paul's assassination. In an attempt to remove the Swetchines from the court, the General was accused of incompetence. Offended, he resigned and decided to leave Russia, to which Madame Swetchine remained deeply attached. They determined to go to France. With their departure the first panel of this Franco-Russian diptych closes. The second opens on the Paris of the Restoration.

WHEN on May 3, 1814, "le retour des lys" was marked by the arrival of Louis XVIII in a coach drawn by eight white horses, the restoration of the monarchy was accepted by one-tenth of the population with enthusiasm, by three-tenths with reasonable caution, and by the rest of France with hesitancy or hostility. The shattering experiences of the Revolution had not been forgotten by a vindictive nobility despoiled of their possessions and haunted by visions of their parents' heads on spikes. Scattered remains of the army still worshipped Napoleon; Revolutionists and liberals raged at the return of the Bourbons which rendered their dreams vain.

It would be interesting to know Madame Swetchine's first reaction to the French capital in its incredible complexity and smouldering strife, quite different from her idea of it, though few strangers ever came to grasp and understand the national character better than she. But, in any event, it was inevitable that this daughter of Bossuet and Joseph de Maistre should gravitate to the Faubourg St. Germain, the stronghold of the Altar and the Throne, and find there her old emigré friends who welcomed her. Among the first of her new acquaintances was Chateaubriand, "the father of liberal Catholicism." Despite her background and formation, Madame Swetchine's vast curiosity and open mind no doubt explain her receptivity to the new and liberal ideas which were to battle their way into the Church in the coming years.

Firmly believing one's station in life to be an indication of Divine Will, she felt that she owed it to her country to represent it with the dignity of her rank. When the doors of her salon opened to admit the élite, the visitors found themselves in a large drawing-room tastefully furnished with objects brought from Russia, magnificent candelabras, and fresh flowers. But beauty, not luxury, was the keynote. For she was quite content with a simple iron bed that she would often have moved in the drawing-room or the adjoining library when, after an exhausting day, she was too weary to retire elsewhere. For her life soon assumed the double aspect that was to characterize it—a life devoted to two categories of persons, those who came to the salon, and those whom *she* visited: the poor, the sick, and the afflicted.

Some awareness of the law of compensation probably aroused a special pity

MADAME SWETCHINE'S SALON

in her for those deprived of speech. Her own power of expression may explain in part her compassion for the inarticulate. As president of the committee of patronage of an institution for deaf-mutes, she adopted one of their number and brought her into her own household.

LET us review the typical day of this transplanted Slav in the era of candle and quill. To begin with, the nights were usually a torture without rest, for her health had constantly deteriorated. Lying down, or even sitting for more than an hour or two at a time was impossible. Fifteen, twenty times a night she rose and walked the floor for relief from her malady. At dawn she would dress and, not yet having her own chapel, she would steal out to the earliest Mass at the parish church. On her return an hour was devoted to spiritual reading (never, however, to "livres de piété," which she claimed made her yawn on the second page), another hour of study devoted to whatever engrossed her at the moment. And then it would be time for the General. In his rooms on the next floor, she would read him the papers, talk over the news from Russia, discuss the literature beginning to appear there. Then, lest he become bored later in the day, she would arrange for him a pleasant game of whist.

Next came the hospitals and the private visits to an ever-growing list of needy who were often unaware that their angel was making severe cuts in her personal allotment to help them. At three o'clock the salon's doors officially opened and save for the dinner hour, rarely closed before midnight. Cloppet, her faithful manservant, reported shortly after her death: "She used to be on the go from six o'clock in the morning till an hour or two after midnight. . . . She had a talent that few persons in the world possess: the right language for each class she saw. . . . I used to see all those who had come seeking consolation go away with satisfaction written on their faces."

IT WAS probably on such a day that Charles de Montalembert was brought to her for the first time. Born in England in 1819, the blue-eyed boy with golden curls (so he appears in a miniature shown me recently by his granddaughter) was now twenty-one and an impetuous champion of liberalism and the underdog. Having heard of the new liberal Catholic paper founded by the Abbé de Lamennais, he wrote the director, and offered his time, talent, and the other means at his disposal for the "cause." Madame Swetchine, as one of the paper's first subscribers, was happy to meet the enthusiast who had written in its columns: "We bless Providence to have cast us into the middle of an epoch in which anyone having a few drops of Christian blood in his veins would find it difficult to remain unoccupied. These struggles are the joy of our conscience. *L'Eglise libre dans l'Etat libre!*" Sharing these views and

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joining the editorial staff was another young man, a former lawyer, named Lacordaire.

It was not long, however, before the brilliant editorials launching the "new ideas" aroused heated opposition in the Hierarchy. The skies darkened; the "struggles" became less "joyful"; and the first blow fell in November 1831 when the *AVENIR* was suspended. With considerable apprehension Madame Swetchine watched Lamennais, Montalembert and Lacordaire—a veritable troika champing at the bit—head impulsively for Rome, bent on appealing to supreme authority.

Reluctant to give public censure to this valiant team whose ideas might be inopportune but whose faith was unquestioned, Gregory XVI asked only for a report of the situation. He then requested the three to return to France. With characteristic Breton stubbornness, Lamennais refused to budge until the official response would be given. Montalembert decided to stay with his master. Lacordaire alone left Rome.

The response was unfavorable.

Whereupon Lamennais declared on leaving that he would continue publication, thereby inaugurating the series of disasters that were to pursue his ill-starred career. Two encyclicals were issued. The first, *Mirari vos*, liquidated the *AVENIR*. The unhappy Charles, while trying to appease his master and persuade him to take up the fight on political and social grounds, suddenly found himself the target for further blame. The second encyclical, *Singulari nos*, was aimed at his translation of and Preface for Mickiewicz' *Polish Pilgrims*. Submissive, but crushed, he wrote in his private diary: "Here is the first mark of public attention I receive from the Head of the Church, to the defense of which I have concentrated all my youth. Here I am held up for the reprobation of Catholics, I who every day am detaching myself from everything that is not Catholic and am resolved to live only for the Church."

This is where an admirable series of letters begins from Madame Swetchine to "her dear Charles," "her dear child," launched too young and inexperienced into the maelstrom of passions and politics. Under her serene and maternal guidance we see him turning to other works which result, in collaboration with Ozanam, in the Conferences of St. Vincent de Paul.

The inconsolable Lacordaire, who of all her friends was to become one of the most faithful till her death, writes:

It was after the fall of the *AVENIR* that I saw her for the first time. I floated onto the shores of her soul like a wreck broken by the waves, and I still remember, twenty-five years later, what light and strength she put at the service of a young man who was unknown to her. Her counsels sustained me, preventing either lassitude or exaltation. She was marvellous in discovering one's point of weakness and in coming to the

MADAME SWETCHINE'S SALON

rescue. . . . It is impossible to say for how many souls this unique soul was the torch.

From now on we find Madame Swetchine present at all the important events of his life: advising him during his brief appearance in the National Assembly; pleading his cause with the Archbishop, Msgr. Quélen, when his former connection with Lamennais might have prevented his giving his famous Conférences from the pulpit of Notre Dame; and when his new methods and apostolic fire proved too much for the conservative clergy and he left for a self-imposed period of solitude in Rome, her letters followed him, bringing comfort. Five years later he returned, having meanwhile discovered his vocation: the restoration of the Dominican Order in France.

WHILE Montalembert and the future Dominican were pondering their problems in seclusion, another young man of quite different temperament was working and praying for the realization of his own dream. In Solesmes on a day when spring sunlight enchants the old stones and quiet waters of the Sarthe, great bells clang regularly to announce the liturgical hours. For here the dream of Prosper Guéranger, born a mile or two from this town, was, mainly through the efforts of Madame Swetchine, at last to come true.

Preserved in the monastery is their correspondence, begun in 1833. It began shortly after his first visit to her when her eyes had filled with tears of joy on learning that the twenty-eight-year-old priest, with three companions, was trying to settle in the ruins of Solesmes and attempt a revival of Benedictine life there. For whatever satisfaction of conscience may have been obtained by her conversion to the Roman core of the Universal Church, a great void must have been left unfilled in her Russian soul by the absence of liturgical music. The insipid art of the nineteenth century and the collection of "pious practices" must have been a sorry substitute for the ikons and Slavonic chants of her childhood.

So it was with joy that she promised to help in the restoration of the abbey, where God was once more to be praised in the venerable Gregorian melodies. Her own means being inadequate for such an enterprise, she enlisted sympathies everywhere, took up subscriptions, even solicited rubles from friends in far-away Odessa, for her "chers Bénédictins." She had now become the banker of Solesmes. Touching are passages in the faded letters covered with the young monk's minute writing:

. . . It is late, the curfew has rung; I still have my light burning because I am Prior, otherwise I should be in bed. . . . I have been thinking of you and your long nights in chanting the verse: *in noctibus estollite manus vestros* . . . I end in recommending—as though it were necessary!—our dear work to your zeal. Remember that you are the coöperator of Providence in the affairs of Solesmes, in a word, do

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continue to help us . . . For you, Madame, you know I am sure with what filial and respectful tenderness (allow me these words, for have you not been a mother to me by your solicitude?) I dare call myself your very humble and obedient servant, P. Guéranger.

Four years later Solesmes received the dignity of being an Abbey, with Dom Guéranger as abbot.

IT WAS not until 1835 that Madame Swetchine's sanctuary was transformed into a chapel and solemnly consecrated by Mgr. Quélen. And what more perfect consultant for the construction and decoration than Dom Guéranger who, like Lacordaire, Dupanloup and many celebrated Churchmen, afterwards said Mass there? In one of the letters found at Solesmes, she writes him enthusiastically of the two small balustrades installed for receiving Communion, and of the velvet-covered Roman missal in which was set a large cross of amethysts.

But the most unusual feature of the chapel was a silver statue of the Virgin and Child, twenty-two inches high and strikingly crowned. As a maid of honor to the Empress Marie Feodorovna, Madame Swetchine had received a special decoration to be worn at court. It consisted of an imperial crown over the Empress' initial, *M*, all in diamonds. Remembering this jewel, she placed the *M* at the base of the statue and on its head the diadem, thus exalting the Queen of Heaven to the rank of Empress—Empress of Russia!

These were the "great years" of her beneficent influence which spanned the Restoration, the Second Republic, and the Second Empire. But hers was an unobtrusive influence never seeking to dominate, impose, or proselytize—even in the case of the General, who, to her lasting but mute regret, never entered the Church of Rome. Without her letters and notes it would be difficult to believe that this woman, constantly surrounded and solicited, craved solitude with an unbelievable intensity. Yet her life, so nobly and cheerfully dedicated to the service of others, knew but little sequestration until her wretched health demanded a yearly cure at Vichy.

In 1849, as a result of a movement made to avert a fall on coming out of her parish church, a nerve was badly injured. For the rest of her life she was to be the prey of a violent facial neuralgia that rarely left her and for which there were no wonder drugs. She bore her suffering with patience; she continued her essential activities, though the salon's door opened more and more rarely. But that second pole of her existence, the beloved chapel that she shared with her many friends, found her kneeling more frequently. When, in 1857, her condition became alarming and the faithful Lacordaire hurried to her side, with Falloux, Cochin, the duc de Broglie and other friends of her

(Continued on page 134)

The Victorian Vision: An Anglican Pilgrim Novel

BY ANNE FREMANTLE

A PROSPEROUS vitriol manufacturer, native of and resident in Birmingham, England, was author of one of the strangest best-sellers of the nineteenth century. Joseph Henry Shorthouse, born in 1824, began writing his long historico-philosophical romance *John Inglesant* in 1866. Four years before, he had been baptized into the Church of England. Both his parents had been Quakers, and many suspected Shorthouse's conversion to be from social motives—for in England the upper and upper-middle classes are mostly members of the Established Church, while the lower middle classes and "the poor" are "chapel" or lower. But his wife wrote that "his mental conflict during his conversion was certainly severe. Combined with overstudy, and probably not uninfluenced by a fall from his pony some years before, it led to a break in his health and repeated epileptic seizures." For ten years Shorthouse devoted to the composition of his novel all his evenings and one day a week, during which he stayed home from the office. Hawking his manuscript took another four years, and he had begun to publish it at his own expense, when Macmillan stepped in and issued it in 1881.

It was first issued in three volumes, and total sales exceeded 80,000. It went into nine editions within the year and was translated into several languages. Its appearance was most appositively timed, for it came in the middle of the great Tractarian controversy. Gladstone had Shorthouse to luncheon, and the latter was able to enjoy the good things of life even better after his success than before. In his youth he had been nicknamed "The Marquis" because of his love of fine clothes, and he kept always his "soft, slightly prelatial hands." He never cared for boys' games. Nor was his religion austere: of Christmas he wrote, "I am not in favor of devoting such days entirely to direct devotion. I think the flesh should also be called on to rejoice." All his life he had the strongest possible distaste for the poor, for slums, and for the squalor and sordidness amongst which his own workmen lived.

JOHN INGLESANT purports to be the memoirs of a young man whose mother, a Catholic, died giving birth to him and to his twin brother in 1622. John is boarded out by his father with the Vicar of Ashley, a scholarly Platonist and Rosicrucian who believed in alchemy and astrology. When John is fourteen, he is summoned home to find there his father, his brother, Eustace, and a man variously known as Mr. (or "Father") Hall, or Father St. Clare, a

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Jesuit, to whom his father entrusts the boy, in return for allowing his house to be made a refuge for recusants. One of these latter gives John, now sixteen, *The Flaming Heart, or the Life of St. Theresa*.

"This book opened a new world of thought to John and he read it many times from beginning to end." He consults his master about the contemplation it teaches, but the latter "seemed more desirous to put ideas into his book than to impart them," and John goes for help elsewhere. A quiet country parson seems to understand what he is after, but on his return home he turns to Father St. Clare, who "listened (though it may be doubted if the recital was altogether agreeable to him)." John now sets out with his Jesuit for London. His training is completed, and he has learnt that "it is the very seal of a gentleman to obey." The Jesuit has directed "his whole mental power upon the boy's susceptible nature, and the result could not be doubtful."

The book thereafter consists of strophe and anti-strophe; the small voice of Divine Light speaking to John, who is always thwarted in his obedience to Jesus by his allegiance to the Jesuits.

At court, he becomes one of the Queen's pages, and attaches himself to Laud and to the High Church party. He goes to Little Gidding, the co-educational protestant monastery, where Nicholas Farrar and his family serenely pursue the most delightfully absurd of *viae mediae*. "I suffer equal and continual obloquy both from being a Papist and a Puritan," Farrar complains. Some of the loveliest pages in the book describe this saintly household, and Mary Collet, with whom John falls in love. They receive the sacrament together, and to John it seems that a gracious antique stained-glass figure of the Savior, in the window above the altar, enters into his soul. This memory and his distaste for the Jesuit were all that prevented John from joining the Catholic Church, for between 1630 and 1640 there was a minor peace for the Church in England, and there were many conversions, especially of those about the Queen. It was Little Gidding which, for John, "prevented that craving after the sacrifice of the Mass, which doubtless is the strongest of all the motives which lead men to Rome."

The Jesuit, who for his own purposes did not wish John to join the Church, removed him from the Queen's entourage, and had him made esquire of the body to the King, whom John accompanies to Scotland. John sees the ghost of Strafford visit the king the night after his execution; then is present at Naseby, and accompanies Laud to the scaffold. The Jesuit sends him to Thomas Hobbes, that he may learn how to avoid Romish errors, and John learns he must be loyal, even though he knows the king will betray him as he betrayed Strafford. In the complicated story of the Irish rebellion, John saves his master's honor at the expense of his own. There is a moment of tremendous tension at John's trial, when Lord Biron understands that he is condemning an innocent man.

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John actually mounts the scaffold on his own account, but is saved by the ubiquitous Jesuit.

HE RIDES to the country with his brother, who then is murdered by his rich wife's Italian lover. John vows vengeance. In exile in France he finds Mary Collet, who had meant to take the veil, dying of a fever caused by the hardships and suffering she had endured since leaving Little Gidding. She asks him, "Will you serve your heavenly master as well as you have served your king?" And John's reply is to beg Mary to show him how. But she will not: "He must teach you, not I," she says.

After her death, John seeks out a Benedictine, a convert to Rome, who urges him to abandon his worldly life and even his studies. "You wish this life's wisdom and to walk with Christ as well; and you are your own witness that it cannot be . . . come with me to Douay, you shall engage in no study that is a delight or effort to the intellect, but you shall teach the smallest children in the school and visit the poorest people . . . and all for Christ." But, as already twice before, John Inglesant refuses.

"The next day the Jesuit arrived in Paris." John is sent off to Rome, where he negotiates with a grand duke for the cession of his estates to the Papacy. He marries an Italian girl and has a son. At last he catches up with his brother's murderer. But the latter asks for mercy in the name of Jesus, and Inglesant forgives him. They go together to a nearby church, where John offers his sword on the altar. Mass is just beginning, and the priest "when he had received the sacred elements himself, turned, and, influenced probably by his appearance and his position at the altar, he offered Inglesant the Sacrament. He took it."

THE murderer turns monk, and later, in his turn, forgives his sister's seducer, the brother of John's wife, Lauretta. Inglesant goes to Naples whilst the plague is raging, escapes it to find on his return home that his wife and son both have contracted it and died. For consolation, John turns to the Spanish priest, Molinos, already famous, and they have a long talk, in which Molinos excuses the bitterly self-condemnatory John as being one of the men whom God is determined to win by love, "a select nature, deliberately reared and bred, who cannot take the same attitude to religious questions as a man brought up without the necessities of life, hardened by toil and exposure, and unenlightened by learning and the arts." Molinos is the beloved director of many such as John. Daily communion without confession was his system, and

by insisting that freedom from mortal sin was the only prerequisite of communion, Molinos directly attacked that dependence on the confessor which is such an obstacle in the soul's progress toward's God. Those who followed him, escaped that unsatisfactory rotation of formal penitence and sinful relapse, or wearisome devotion and stale pleasure. These gave place to an enthusiasm which believed that, instead of

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ceremonies and bowing in the outer court, the soul was introduced into heavenly places, and saw God face to face: a wonderful experience, in exchange for lifeless formality and rule, of communion with the Lord, with nothing before the believer as he knelt at the altar, save the Lord Himself, day by day, unshackled by penance and confession as heretofore.

This view of Molinos as a precursor of Pope Pius X is unusual, to say the least, and it is a topsy-turvy Alice-in-Wonderland view which makes confession the shackle rather than the sin which necessitates it. But Shorthouse's expression of a sincerely deep feeling for the Real Presence was unusual in a member of the Church of England at that time.

John Inglesant is now asked to be the advocate of Molinos and his methods with the Jesuits, and, bravely as he has defended Charles I, so now he stands by Molinos also. But in vain; Molinos is condemned with about 200 of his followers. Inglesant, "dressed in a cassock of silk, with the gown of a Benedictine made of the finest cloth. His head was tonsured and . . . he had round his neck a band of fine cambric, and at his wrist ruffles of rich lace, and he wore on his hand a diamond of great value. He had, indeed, to one who saw his dress and not his face, entirely the look of a *petit-maitre* and even, what is more contemptible still—of a *petit-maitre* priest." He makes a speech "written before, every word carefully considered and arranged by himself and some of the first masters of style then in Rome." In this Inglesant suggests a compromise: the Molinists are to make outward submission; privately they are to be allowed communion without confession. The Jesuits refuse. Inglesant is sent back to England, where he settles at Worcester, at last an Anglican at heart.

INGLESANT'S final judgment on the Romish Church is "this is the supreme quarrel of all—on the one side obedience and faith, on the other, freedom. The English Church, as established by the law of England, offers the supernatural to all who choose to come. Upon the altars . . . the divine presence hovers as surely, to those who believe it, as upon the splendid altars of Rome. The way is open, is barred by no confession, no human priest."

The freedom he claimed to find in the Church of England may, or may not, have been real. But the reason he claimed for finding it there is based upon no possible logic, no conceivable *sequitur*. If Christ is what John Inglesant believed Him to be, then the Divine Presence does not "hover upon altars for those who believe." It is "verily and indeed present" whenever the words of consecration are sacramentally spoken by a properly ordained priest.

When questioned by Lee as to whether, if absolute truth be revealed, there is not "an inspired exponent of it, else from age to age it could not get itself revealed to mankind," Inglesant answers, "This is the Papist argument. There is only one answer to it. Absolute truth is not revealed."

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"How, then," asks Lee, "can we know the truth at all?"

Inglesant replies, "We cannot say how we know it, but this very ignorance proves that we can know."

So, by devious means, and after 450 beautifully written and very exciting pages, and ten years of writing, Shorthouse returns to the Quaker doctrine of his parents. The 39 Articles and the three creeds are abandoned; the Catechism and the Gospels are gone; but happy in his own private compromise of High Anglican Ritual with the Inner Light, Shorthouse endured with exemplary patience two years of helpless invalidism, and died on March 4, 1903.

RECENT research has discovered *John Inglesant* to be a patchwork of unacknowledged pilfering, a "beautiful job of invisible mending." The Rev. W. K. Fleming, Dr. Montague Summers, and above all Dr. M. Polak of Amsterdam in his masterly thesis on "The Historical, Philosophical and Religious Aspects of John Inglesant" have all investigated and analyzed some of Shorthouse's many "liftings." But these discoveries do not in the least alter the value of *John Inglesant* as a historical romance or as literature.

John Inglesant is a first-rate novel, although Shorthouse made, in spite of his researches (as Dr. Polak points out), many blunders, e.g., John Milton could not have been secretary at the time of John Inglesant's trial, nor could he ever have had the long, clear sight with which Shorthouse credits him. Hampden was not "tried" for refusing to pay ship-money; he was brought before the exchequer court, and there was no trial. Funnier, perhaps, is that in the account of the elections in the Sacred College, Shorthouse has a key brought in and given to the *Bishop of Rome*, during the secret consistory electing the new *Pope*. Yet none of these details, nor hundreds of other minor errors of fact, detract from the total merits of this lively tale.

For the answer to Pilate's eternally unanswered question is in the question itself: Truth is what *is*. Wherever there is reality, at whatever level, there is truth. And Shorthouse wrote better than he knew. For his novel is true to itself, preserves its own interior integrity. Given the character of his hero, that is how he would have behaved; given any of the premises that occur, that is what would have happened. Yet the very truth he served as an artist, Shorthouse shunned as a man. His one aim in writing *John Inglesant*, he wrote in 1880, "is to exalt the unpopular doctrine that the end of existence is not the good of one's neighbor but one's own culture." He hated the Church bitterly. "The charge against the Roman Catholic Church is not that her doctrines do not contain the germs of truth, but that, having based her system upon the profoundest truths, she has succeeded in making truth itself a lie."

The many changes of attitude toward the Church in *John Inglesant*, from

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grudging admiration to outspoken hostility, reflect ten years' preoccupation with a subject about which Shorthouse remained as confused as did his hero, but from which he could never escape.

Madame Swetchine's Salon

(Continued from page 128)

later days, she expressed her last desires. The simplest of funerals, no draperies or black-bordered cards, a tombstone like her husband's. On it appears a line in Latin, her dates, and the names she received in Baptism and Confirmation: "Sophie" and "Jeanne"—*wisdom and love*. What names could be more appropriate?

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Review-Articles

Sheila Kaye-Smith Signifying Little

The View from the Parsonage. By Sheila Kaye-Smith. Harper. \$3.50.

THE element which distinguishes twentieth century prose is its fine style, the particularity of diction and rhythm in which its authors have cast each his own special vision of the world. Time was that language of a truly particular nature was suitable only to the poet, and the prose writer was expected to produce a standard form, a kind of journalism really. He was expected to withhold his personal sensitivity and to write from a kind of artistic anonymity, thus keeping from his writing not only his personal opinions but also his opinions as an artist; whereas the poet spoke often through the first person, not personally but sensitively. The twentieth century prose master writes as poets of the past have written; the major characters of his fiction are ideal projections of his own artistic nature. In the prose art of this century we find, therefore, within stylistic texture itself, a sense of a special vision of the world, a distinct statement of faith. Hemingway, Faulkner, Mann, Wolfe—what distinguishes such men is the separate vision of each, as portrayed in their various styles.

As for Sheila Kaye-Smith's language in *The View from the Parsonage*, she not only fails to produce a prose that conveys a sense of a particular view—she fails to bring her clerical narrator alive.

The novel is a long, dull, sentimental, pretentious, Victorian tale told by the old Anglican minister of a backwater community. The man had originally selected this living because it had "called to him with promises of healing for his trampled heart." The diction promised in this line continues in rather the same vein except when a peasant of the regional setting speaks. Then one finds an unwitting likeness to a bit of John P. Marquand's fine literary satire in *Wickford Point*—the absurdly stilted narration of the Harvard teacher's novel.

The View from the Parsonage opens with a hackneyed and somewhat irrelevant scene which is never fully accomplished. On page two this scene fades without having proliferated; and for more than twenty-five pages one is dragged through a conglomerate historical background which demonstrates Sheila Kaye-Smith's research abilities, one supposes, but hardly her dramatic skill. Seldom can one make legitimate value judgments about language forms, but regarding this book one can say simply that the narrative technique is wrong. The characters—a love-lorn, young, Anglican clergyman; a gone-Roman, ex-Anglican clergyman; a gone-atheist, ex-Anglican clergyman; the latter's daughters, one of whom eventually becomes a Sister Clare after sowing some sophisticated oats, the other who becomes a conscious hypocrite after having her moment of spiritualism—the characters are types, and they remain types, at times almost caricatures.

They are the sort of characters that Dickens produced. Dickens, however, succeeded with them admirably because, no matter how artificial their construction was, they hustle into his stories with such Gargantuan vitality that we cannot deny them. We may quibble about the sentimental foundations of *Bleak House*; we cannot, though, deny that it carries us along. What Dickens knew well and many of his imitators know not at all is that the type is more suitable

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to the dramatic action of the stage than to the novel's frequently introspective bent. Because of this, Dickens' novels are rich in external drama. Sheila Kaye-Smith fails in *The View from the Parsonage* not because her characters exhibit Dickensian artificiality, but because she includes in the book few if any real scenes, and of the scenes that we do see most are not calculated to produce the best effect with the problem at hand. For instance, when the clerical narrator and a young lady friend travel together to France to fetch back two fleshly erring lambs, the only scene in many pages is a would-be comic bit concerning the Gallic inability to understand why the two travellers do not share a bed. This is hardly comic-relief; it seems rather to be evidence that the author had not yet, on page 203, decided on quite what the shape of her story was. There is this hesitancy, this shuffling away from the significant element, at each turn of the story.

The air of indirection is not limited to a few inconsequential scenes. The entire production is strewn with uncorrelated elements. Characters enter as though for a major reason and then drift off to limbo like the comrades of ocean voyages. One of the major figures is disposed of in a casual second marriage which leads to his apparent murder. There is no structure to give this action meaning. It simply happens as in life. In fact, a great deal of the action in this book happens in the same disorganized way that things happen in life.

Nor can one ascribe the accidental nature of the story to some new theory of art without running into an inconsistency in another direction. The character motivation is limited to such quaint drives as *generosity*, *loving-kindness*, and the like. Now it is hard to believe that a writer who finds the foundations of character in these naive conceptions has given us an over-all dramatic form of such subtlety that we did not perceive it. The over-simplified motivations mentioned here are themselves a serious flaw in the book, especially so in an age when psychology and other studies have given the articulation of twentieth century vision a complexity that earlier writing generally lacked. Too, it is one thing for Dante to find sublimity in his love of God; it is quite another for Sheila Kaye-Smith to think that she has explained a person when she speaks of his "loving-kindness." Dante's conception of God was not, after all, a very simple matter.

The attitude toward religion which one finds in the novel is what might be expected: there is no suggestion of a statement of faith in the actual writing. We know in about which direction Hemingway's faith lies from reading him; we know about what Faulkner's faith must be; we get no such help from Sheila Kaye-Smith. In all parts of the novel, whenever matters of faith enter, the narrator shifts as though with that English fear of broaching religious discussion lest someone be offended. The Catholic Church is handled with about the philosophical depth that marks the usual Oursler or Douglas product. The significant transition of spiritual stability in the major character—from a free-thinking, free-loving, young divorcee to a fervent Sister Clare—is ignored completely. In point of fact, there is no one place in the book where an internal development is handled with force, although the major advantage of written language over other art forms is its ability to present such internal matters.

In the end it seems that through all the confusion of narrative direction and the lack of disposal of characters and the non-fruiting of bits of drama the story is not really *about* anything in particular. For instance, one character is some-

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what telepathic, and for a time we feel that this will lead to some insight into the relation of spiritualism and religion, but no; the handling of this remains on the synopsis level, unviable as solid fiction. Again, one entire family is Catholic, living in, of course, anti-Roman England; but we get little or no experience of being a Roman Catholic in England. The truth is that the English Catholic is nearly always an exceptionally fine member of the Church, conscious of the national attitude against his faith and set on publicly proving the good effect of that faith in himself. There is no reason to believe from reading *The View from the Parsonage* that Sheila Kaye-Smith felt that Catholicism was intrinsically different from any other religion or, for that matter, that religion was ultimately different from any other basis for human behavior. The figure which one feels should be the focus of much insight and feeling, the old free-thinker, is presented to us in but a few scenes, these much under-done, and we never get from him any new or even particularly significant attitude about the real drama his position apparently symbolizes, the loss of religion by many in the modern world.

In all honesty one must conclude that this book creates the impression that it was written about what might have been an interesting group of people involved in a significant problem but that its narrator had no understanding of the human experience involved. She not only withholds her judgment in sectarian matters; she offers no suggestion of the particular way which she feels the materials she handles should be viewed—except perhaps the suggestion that one should be well-mannered, which can hardly be considered a significant contribution.

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ROBERT O. BOWEN

Claude Mauriac, Critic

Hommes et Idées d'aujourd'hui. By Claude Mauriac. Paris: Albin Michel.

THE son of François Mauriac has thus far withstood the temptation to write novels. He is probably best known as film critic of the *Figaro littéraire*. But few varieties of critical writing are more patently ephemeral than this; and most critics prefer to believe that, for a few years at least, their considered opinions merit survival and attention. Claude Mauriac, therefore, absorbing literary influences and opinions almost before attaining awareness of his own existence, has centered a large share of his interests and talents upon the literature so familiar to him, that immediately of his own time and country. During the past fifteen years he has published, among other things, appraisals of Proust, Gide, Malraux, Cocteau, Breton, and Jouhandeau. To the essays in the present volume, which originally appeared in the *Table ronde* and which deal with personalities and achievement so diverse as those of Alain, Barrès, Gide, Claudel, Camus, Breton, Proust, Valéry, Saint-Exupéry, Van Gogh, and Simone Weil, he has sought to impart unity. The unity indicated by the title, first of all, is that these people and the ideas they express belong to our own uncertain and disunited present. But also, and more importantly, the unity of theme consists of the problem of death and some sort of immortality or, in more general terms, the problem of sacred and profane religion.

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The merits of the book, while authentic and serious, are not instantly apparent. There are stretches of tedious, arid, and graceless prose. It was, Claude Mauriac confesses, to the philosopher Alain (Emile Chartier) that he owed, among other things, "d'irremplaçables leçons de style." Since Alain felt that his thought, by being too clearly and coherently formulated, lost a great part of its efficacy, he cultivated deliberately—so he tells us—a certain obscurity in style. The virtues of such a method, while not novel, are obvious: thus expressed, even platitudes take on an air of profundity; clichés seem transmuted into quintessences. It was from Alain that the younger Mauriac acquired the conviction that "le style est la récompense de celui qui ne pense pas au style." One could ask for no more eloquent refutation of this ripe romantic fallacy than is provided by the practice of both master and disciple. It is certain that, to be able to afford, like Stendhal or Gide, certain real or apparent negligences in one's writing, one must first have achieved a style. One might, therefore, put it thus: "Le laisser-aller (ou le *naturel*) dans le style, est la récompense de celui qui a beaucoup pensé au style."

This style—which is the reward for not thinking about style—is marred, furthermore, by another romantic infirmity (criticized acutely in this very book): the variety of verbal inflation characterized by over-exploitation, often in rather discutible context, of the vocabulary of religion. Access to Alain's "religion de l'esprit," for example, did not come easily to the young Mauriac, yet, when it did come: "ce fut une grâce, une révélation." Alain had himself—like so many others—set the tone by describing his master, Jules Lagneau, as "le seul Dieu, à vrai dire, que j'aie reconnu."

And, indeed, in discussing those writers whom he most admires, Claude Mauriac frees himself almost entirely from the tyranny of measure. His critical faculties are awarded a vacation, while the writer over-indulges in what he calls the "préjugé favorable de l'amitié." He is unable to discuss Alain in terms other than those of enraptured panegyric: "Le plus efficace de cette énergie demeure virtuel. Elle nous enrichit par des voies détournées. Nous serions en peine, le plus souvent, de dire comment." Mention of Malraux likewise sends our author into excesses: "*La Psychologie de l'Art* est une Ethique, beaucoup plus qu'une Esthétique; et une Métaphysique, beaucoup plus qu'une Ethique," etc. One regrets, furthermore, that the "favorable prejudice due to friendship," and perhaps also a reverence for established and accepted names and achievements—a sentiment which, in this same book, he analyzes with honesty and insight—have prevented him from telling us about Gide and Valéry, what we feel he might have told about them. Yet where this sentiment does not operate, or seems to function merely by virtue of artificial stimulation, as in the essay on Barrès—a gesture, no doubt, of filial piety, in partial repayment of what the young François Mauriac owed the author of the *Culte du Moi*—Claude Mauriac fails to interest us: he does not even, we feel, succeed in interesting himself.

There is, finally, a rather facile obeisance to many *poncifs* current in the contemporary literary and intellectual scene. It is simply that, while rejecting one set of *poncifs*, he possesses, or is possessed, by another.

In his discussion of Saint-Exupéry, whose present reputation he holds, with some reason, to be unduly inflated, he evokes a collection of clichés: those which, like a thick vapor, envelop the man of action—à la T. E. Lawrence, the

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early Malraux and the Rimbaud of Africa—who, while primarily interested in action for its own sake, and disdainful of “mere” literature, does deign nonetheless to toss off, in moments of weakness and boredom, an occasional literary masterpiece. Yet, in the opinion of his associates, the man of action who dabbles in letters has been guilty of something resembling indecent exposure; and Saint-Exupéry “est mort d’avoir voulu conquérir à ses propres yeux et à ceux de ses pairs le droit d’écrire.” Claude Mauriac rebukes his author for having taken pains with his style, and insists that “le meilleur Saint-Exupéry est celui du témoignage brut, enregistrement direct du meilleur de l’homme.” The fact remains that, if Saint-Exupéry’s prose lacked all literary merit, and if Rimbaud had written *only* the letters from Africa, and if T. E. Lawrence were not the author of the literary masterpiece known as *The Seven Pillars of Wisdom*, these men of action—their “enregistrement direct du meilleur de l’homme” notwithstanding—would have excited in us an interest so overpowering that we should no longer recall even their names. This literary repudiation of “literature” is manifest on another plane in the rational irrationalism of writers like Jean-Paul Sartre.

Claude Mauriac renders homage likewise to another aged and somewhat asthmatic cliché, that of *l’inquiétude*: he salutes “un Barrès qui nous est fraternel dans la mesure surtout où c’est un angoissé.” But this forms part of a larger *poncif*, that of *l’humain*. In a world which has a dim vision of God, and for which, consequently, the notion of perfection lacks force and substance, it is consoling to one’s self-importance to exalt one’s imperfections, to make virtues of one’s limitations. With man at the center of the universe one seeks, if one practices literary criticism, to explain everything in terms of “humanity.” Emphasis will be, therefore, upon the man rather than upon the work, upon the crude sketch or fragment rather than the finished work of art, since what partakes of perfection clearly transcends the ineptitude which normally characterizes the productions of homo called sapiens. The work, indeed, becomes interesting only for what it tells us about the man. Literature becomes a collection of documents to be utilized for biographical purposes.

The *journal intime*, or its equivalent takes rank as the supreme literary form. If the amateurs of this genre were to choose between a major work such as Proust’s *Recherche du temps perdu*, and an intimate diary—if it existed—on the same scale by the author, I believe that they would without hesitation choose the latter. They prefer Gide’s *Journal* to all else that he wrote; Flaubert’s *Correspondance* to *Madame Bovary*; Stendhal’s marginalia to *La Chartreuse de Parme*. “L’Homme sans son œuvre,” as M. Léon Pierre-Quint puts it: for the work might get in the way of the man. Surely the anti-Proustian aesthetic (and ethics) is in its most voluptuous blooming.

Of the excellences of this genre Claude Mauriac is persuaded. Is he not, like most of his literary contemporaries, author of a journal which fills volumes and which will surely, in the years to come, fill many more?

From the writer’s point of view the form—if one can call it that—of the journal possesses huge advantages. He can produce more copy more quickly, and with less trouble; and this copy, because more hastily written, will appear “spontaneous” and more “human.” He can talk about himself and, unlike a psychiatric patient, be paid for the privilege by the public which buys successive volumes. He can gain credit for being “sincere” while telling exactly

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what he chooses to tell. If, like Gide, he elects to reveal facts which might seem to testify against him, he will be praised for his frankness in disclosing what less courageous souls would have concealed. He becomes automatically his own creator, the hero of his own unending romance. And the artificiality of such procedure, the unreality of the personage thus fabricated, will be apparent to very few readers.

The writer may even end by finding himself prisoner of his own diary and entirely incapable of transcending it. Thus Charles Du Bos, who aspired to become the Christian Proust (and of whom, in this volume, Claude Mauriac offers an entertaining, sympathetic, and perceptive analysis): his critical "approximations" are, at their best, intuitive "pages de journal," always relentlessly subjective. The writer may awaken to find himself a solipsist. Like the protagonist of Kafka's *Metamorphosis*, he may discover that a return to his former unexhibited self is simply not possible.

The most curious thing about the *Journal* of Julien Green is the extent to which, in wishing to be "sincere" and "personal," the writer forfeits both sincerity and personality. No one, Green admits, can tell the entire truth about himself: a diarist finds it necessary to suppress and, consequently, to arrange, distort, equivocate. And it is likewise true that Green is never more banal, never less "personal," than when he speaks directly about himself. (Had not Gide, the great popularizer of this literary fashion, warned that "celui qui veut sauver sa personnalité la perdra?") Speaking of and for himself, Julien Green seems to lose the greater part of those gifts of insight and evocation that make his fiction the considerable achievement which it is. Only when he has succeeded, by means of art, in effecting a transposition of the immediate and the contingent, does he attain the authentic and the "personal." Claude Mauriac concedes that "en définitive, Green ne voit d'autre moyen de dire la vérité sur lui même que d'écrire un roman" and quotes Green's own conclusion that "mon vrai journal est dans mes romans."

But Claude Mauriac's rather naive adherence to these clichés is in great measure offset by his intelligent appraisal of those *poncifs* in which he does not participate. The essays in the present volume entitled "Poncifs contemporains" contain valuable criticism of ideas currently received without question by those who, for the past twenty or thirty years, have been following in what they still believe to be "new" directions. There are acute and close analysis of such related cults as those of Sade and La Fontaine as well as, in the chapter on Camus' *Homme révolté*, of the cliché against which Camus protests and into acceptance of which he ultimately subsides: that of the virtue of revolutionary activity *per se*. (Claude Mauriac is right, I believe, in stressing the importance in Camus' development of the unacknowledged influence of the early Malraux.) All these cults, of course, are manifestations of the contemporary surromantic nihilism which has eroded intellectual and literary no less than ethical and political standards. In politics it produces chaos, followed by the "party line"; in literature, an aggressively self-conscious primitivism, and glorification of irrational cruelty for its own sake, as in the novels of the hard-boiled school and in Breton's exemplary affirmation that "l'acte surréaliste le plus simple consiste à descendre dans la rue, revolver au poing, et à tirer au hasard dans la foule."

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But Claude Mauriac possesses also the critical virtue of candor. He does not hesitate to admit that:

Just among ourselves, the early Gide is not worth a great deal more than the early Barrès. Only, since Gide still benefits by the prejudice in his favour of which Barrès has long since been deprived, no one cares to talk about the reasons which one might have for qualifying one's admiration. It is the question of prestige, one of the most important in literary criticism, but which, almost always, one omits to take into account. According to whether it is by an author with little "backing," like Barrès, or by [a writer with a currently secure reputation like] Gide, the same page will seem to the reader boring, dated or rich in meaning. We all behave a bit like the visitor to the museum who looks for the name of the painter before venturing an opinion on the picture. And I myself never mention the name of such-and-such a writer, author of ten books, who thinks he has genius, and perhaps has it; but his name is not in the catalogue. . . .

This candor, with its consequent insights, is, perhaps, still more manifest in a passage wherein Claude Mauriac discusses a failing to which, as I indicated earlier, his own writing is uncomfortably subject:

It is curious, the tendency of the atheistic or agnostic intellectuals of our time to apotheosize their great men. Lagneau is for Alain, as we have seen, a kind of god. And, we shall see, Sade or Rimbaud for the surrealists. Here now is Jules Roy proclaiming in a preface to *Terre des hommes* that Saint-Exupéry is *one of his men-gods*: "Everything relating to him is included in my devotion. To speak of him one has to commune with oneself, to oneself in a state of prayer. . . . I believe that the influence of Saint-Exupéry will go on increasing and that the shadow of this cathedral will cover the earth. . . ."

One is not surprised to learn that Jules Roy has "consecrated" (indeed the appropriate cliché) an essay to the *Passion de Saint-Exupéry*; and one wonders what the intended recipient of this posthumous fog of incense would have thought of these trances.

But, from this compulsive use and abuse of the concepts and vocabulary of religion by those who seem farthest removed from religion, is one justified in concluding that, for atheists and agnostics as well as for believers, the central problem of our time is, as Dostoevsky believed, a religious one? Can such cults as the "religion" of science and "progress," or that of "humanity" and humanitarian liberalism, or that of history and dialectical materialism, really fill what appears to be an enduring human need? For Claude Mauriac, non-believing son of a believing father, even Alain's "religion de l'esprit" does not seem adequate. He admits that even Alain, who was one of the teachers of Simone Weil, "ne reconnut en elle que ce qu'il lui avait donné. C'est-à-dire presque rien. Nos grands hommes ont leurs limites." In the younger Mauriac there lingers a nostalgia for the real thing, for a God who is not subject to human incomprehensions and misconceptions. "Je pense aussi," he remarks, "qu'il y avait des convertis et qui venaient d'aussi loin que nous." He examines, therefore, the experiences and doctrines of a certain number of "croyants avec ou

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sans la foi" in the hope of discovering clues to an authentic solution of his problems, which are also the problems of so many contemporaries.

Certain metaphysical questions, those of ultimate purpose, death and survival, for example, can be definitely evaded by no one. To everyone comes realization that one must die: how adjust oneself to that overwhelming fact? To this question all of the writers studied by Claude Mariac have, in their several ways, attempted to suggest answers: among them André Gide, with his final bleak negation; Paul-Louis Landsberg, with his rejection of suicide and his death in a concentration camp; Simone Weil, "possédée de Dieu," with her strange "conversion" and the astounding "vocation" which, she felt, made membership within the Christian community impossible for her.

Christianity, however unorthodox her vision of it, was surely, for Simone Weil, the essential experience of her life. Our author quotes Julien Green's appreciation of her, in which he emphasizes her passion for the absolute and her contempt for the relative: he does not hesitate to compare her to St. John of the Cross and Pascal. She had, in fact, re-formulated the *pari de Pascal* in terms which Claude Mauriac finds admirable but unconvincing.

If one tells oneself this: even if the moment of death were to bring nothing new, but were only to end life here below without being the prelude to another life; and even if this world were completely abandoned by God; and even if absolutely nothing real corresponded to that word, God, but only childish illusions—admitting that it were thus, nonetheless, even in that case, I prefer to carry out what seems to me ordered by God, even though the most frightful misfortunes were to come of it, than to accomplish no matter what else. . . . If one subordinates all things to the obedience of God, without restriction, with this thought: if God is real, one thus wins everything—even if the instant of death were to bring nothingness; if this word corresponds to nothing but illusions, one has lost nothing, for then there exists absolutely no real good, and consequently nothing to lose; one has even gained by being in the truth, for one has left illusory goods, which exist but are not real goods, for something which (according to this supposition) does not exist, but which, if it were to exist, would still be the only good. . . .

There would be a great deal more to say about this book: about the essay, for example, which deals so intelligently and perceptively with Proust's recently resuscitated *Jean Santeuil*. And, clearly, while the faults of the present volume are flagrant, its virtues are substantial. It is worth rereading.

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JOHN H. MEYER

The Church, The Forest, and Ernst Jünger

Über die Linie. By Ernst Jünger. Frankfurt on the Main: Klostermann.

Der Waldgang. By Ernst Jünger. Frankfurt on the Main: Klostermann.

Besuch auf Godenholm. By Ernst Jünger. Frankfurt on the Main: Klostermann.

Ernst Jünger. By J. P. Stern. Yale University Press. \$2.50.

UBER *die Linie* ("Crossing the Line") is Jünger's contribution to a volume of essays dedicated to the German philosopher Martin Heidegger for his sixtieth birthday in 1950. It follows the publication of *Strahlungen* and *Hel-*

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iopolis (1949) (cf. *Renaissance* Vol. III, No. 1) and develops and answers one of the burning questions which Jünger's long war diaries dismissed: will there be a way out of the catastrophe, and what can we do to resist the destructive forces of nihilism and to build the coming world of freedom in ourselves?

It was not primarily a political nor even a purely moral question. Jünger looks for salvation, not for mere improvement; he wants to rescue and preserve what death cannot destroy, what death itself must save and confirm, the core of man's freedom, his intimate strength and marvelous superiority over all the forces of destruction.

How, then, do we survive the onslaught of nihilism? Nihilism is a multi-faced phenomenon, embodied in totalitarian states and methods but not limited to them, as unimaginable as "nothing" itself, undefinable, yet recognizable in its manifestations, its "girdle zones," a force outside, but also inside, our very selves. It is a necessary stage of development, both personally to every one of us today and historically. Nietzsche and Dostoevski have recognized the necessary—even promising—but also transient character of nihilism, and have postulated the period that will emerge from it.

It is Jünger's surprising assertion that we already have "passed the line" or are just passing it. The process, however, is not determined blindly and the forum of history is in the heart of every single man. So it is all the more necessary to decide upon the proper therapy of the disease of nihilism, as the danger zone is still extending indefinitely before us, although we may have crossed the "zero line."

Before outlining, very briefly, this therapy, Jünger tries to define as closely as possible the nature of the disease. He shows that nihilism is not the same thing as chaos or decadence or evil. On the contrary, it may go along with rigid organizations, good physical health, and improvements in the social order. Still it means a "reduction" to zero, a consumption of all the reserves. So, the supreme value and the final test can no longer be found in anything firmly established, not even the churches; it will be the "passing of the line" itself.

If this is done, freedom will rise again and man's strength will break forth from the wilderness. The wilderness is Jünger's symbol of the irreducible foundation of man's life, the deepest foundation of his existence, inaccessible to the Leviathan. Death is one of those mysterious gardens; so are eros, artistic creation, and thinking. It is in these uncharted regions that man will be reborn.

That last theme is elaborated in *Der Waldgang*. Here, the wilderness is called the forest. It is again the sanctity of man's innermost self, the inviolable source and prime foundation of his visible individuality, the origin of his royal sovereignty and freedom, the place of his solitude and, at the same time, community with all mankind. He who goes back to the forest will find there unlimited riches and fertility and the only real security in the midst of the catastrophe. He will find freedom, and what is going to last in the coming period will be his work. Necessity and fate will be overcome, moulded, "coined" by his freedom.

The outlaw in ancient times took to the forest; likewise it will be necessary for those among us who have decided to resist the enslaving and annihilating powers of our time, to take to the forest as the starting-point of their action. The man who is ready for the freedom of the life of a modern outlaw is a

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"figure" of our time (Gestalt). The two other significant figures of our historical period are the unknown soldier and the worker. The latter was analyzed by Jünger in his famous book *Der Arbeiter* ("The Worker"). Now, the appearance of the Waldganger, the outlaw in the forest, is a significant indication that we are crossing the line and that a stand is being taken against the overpowering automatism of the Leviathan. Resistance can start from no other point than the forest. Only what is eternal in man can change the temporal, and only what, in itself, in its seeming weakness, is stronger than all the gathered strength of the colossus, its police and its concentration camps, the omnipresence of its fear and its machines, can "fell the giant." Once, the sling of a shepherd, the banner taken up by a girl, the crossbow of a hunter were all that was needed. Man in his secret origin is situated higher than death; once he is aware of it and takes his stand there, he will be superior to the whole physical, political, automatic world of today.

This man will be both unarmed or hardly armed and utterly alone. It is possible to guide him in his actions and in his consciousness. Art, philosophy, and theology must show him the way. In this respect, it is revealing that the contemporary novel has very widely turned to the theme of the solitary individual surrounded by hostile forces. But his decisions will be purely his own. His supreme sovereignty may be assisted, but never conferred, by any institution or force. The forest is more than the church, the law, the state.

The joy and the interest that this little book arouses in us are wholly due to its main intuition, the discovery of the point of eternity in man. Certainly it is a rediscovery. But whenever that intuition is real, as it is here, it takes on the freshness of a first beginning. Still, the book doesn't keep its promise. The picture may be in focus in its central and general part, yet it seems blurred along the margins. Although we may never get impatient at the general statements, we feel keenly disappointed at the lack of concrete and precise delineations. But why don't we even believe the general picture of the modern outlaw? Isn't it because we suspect the author gives us only a secularized version of the Christian conception of man? Jünger does not see man's supernatural depth. However far he may push the analysis of man's origin and strength, we know that it is not far enough.

The question how it is possible, in concrete terms, to find access to the hidden source of regeneration inside us, has become inevitable at the end of *Der Waldgang*. Jünger takes it up in his short story *Besuch in Godenholm* ("Visit at Godenholm").

Two men and a young woman are crossing over to an island off the (apparently Norwegian) coast. From the beginning the atmosphere is that of an impending decision. One of the men, a neurologist, is full of our modern restlessness, ever looking for new ideas and new prospects of salvation. As others before, the Catholic Church and finally the existentialists have failed to cure his profound unrest in this post-war world. Now he is on the point of turning away from the brightest outlook that has hitherto offered a real solution in the person of an extraordinary and mysterious man, Schwarzenberg, whom they are going to see again, as often before, at Godenholm. Schwarzenberg has all the qualities of the mystagogue, the initiator into the "metaphysical adventure that confers meaning and stature to all the others." He should be able to lead them on their "march beyond the limits of time."

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Yet after a long period of preparation, the neurologist is no longer convinced of Schwarzenberg's competency. His disappointment is as extreme as his expectations had been. He is about to depart when the master leads or rather throws them into an experience which leaves them profoundly changed and makes them gain a new level of existence. The three visitors pass through stages of a very intense visualization, a veritable ecstasy. They experience the distress, hunger, shame of mankind, the depth of human desolation. But then they are led to see and touch, each in a different way and in different pictures, the cosmic abundance as it emanates from its undivided origin. They see the underived light, of which even the purest visible light is but a secondary derivation, the golden silence of the Great Noon, power unmoving, but moving all things, the center which reveals the wonderful structure of the world, the One which is the undivided summary of the universe and the supreme victory. A man who has thus transcended the visible world and his own individuality has undergone a change that will single him out among his fellow-men. Even the doorman of a hotel, a few days later, recognized it. And bowed low.

Isn't it strange, this account of a somehow mystical experience told by a hero of the first World War, who as a young man was awarded the highest decorations, who then analyzed our modern world in cold abstract terms, whose very passion is always impersonal and never emotional? We have passed into a new age indeed; the old rationalism is dying fast and new spiritual continents are being rediscovered. The most genuine achievement of our generation is the passionate need for the world beyond the visible horizons. Jünger's book bears witness to that need and also to the distressing insufficiency of a purely natural approach.

Schwarzenberg wants to lead his disciples still further but sees that they are not ready yet. He hints that at the next step they would see that love is the supreme force of the universe, which holds the atoms together. Already in the last part of *Heliopolis* (1949), the author has expressed similar ideas. They show the direction of his thinking and how close he may come to the Christian truths on the natural plane. But they also show the infinite distance which separates these high aspirations from a single act of faith. Of Pascal's three orders, Jünger knows only two.

The language of a writer is always a trustworthy criterion of his rank and originality. But it is *direct* criterion only of its poetic rank, even though it throws an indirect light also on his ideas. J. P. Stern has attempted a critical evaluation of Jünger's entire work through an examination of his language. He starts on the assumption that his language is identical with his ideas, at least for the reader. But this is a confusing principle, which may leave the critic at the mercy of his aesthetic impressions and make him pass philosophical and even moral judgments on the basis of linguistic findings.

The first chapter of Stern's book contains an outline of Jünger's life and publications. Though necessarily second-hand and brief, it is the only part of the book which can be of use to an English-speaking reader who is looking for an introduction into the world of this influential writer. In the following four chapters, after an appraisal of the present stage of development of the German language, Stern discusses at length and very learnedly the different aspects and phases of Jünger's language; his "embattled style," the language of the battlefield, the language of his observations and studies and sketches of nature,

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and his "stereoscopic language," that is Jünger's attempt at a combination of several dimensions in his language. All end up in crushing verdicts, not only of Jünger's style of writing, but also of his ideas and personal attitude. The last chapter is a summary of the preceding condemnations.

The whole of Jünger's work, according to Stern, "springs from a defective response of his sensibility to the issues he has chosen to express." Abstraction is Jünger's monstrous habit, deriving from a "lack of trust in the ability of the detail to tell its own story." "In a response to problems arising from personal relationships, abstraction amounts to an ethical defect." So the source of Jünger's "battlement style" is "the iron in the soul." "Jünger's arrogation of the concept of sacrifice is no more than a piece of desperate rhetoric, a violent plunging among mean words and high sentiments." ". . . If he has really experienced that which is unprecedented in our situation, he should be contented with silence."

These are a few specimen criticisms. They are in line with what Stern thinks of the German language of today, where "an unparalleled corruption of usage has invaded every kind of writing . . . a language replete with grossness, pretentiousness, and abstraction." You begin to get afraid that linguists must be people who can infer anything from any premises, which seem to grow in the fertile regions of an artistic subjectivity.

More than a novelist and creative writer, Jünger is an essayist, a keen observer of our time, a critic of modern man. The bulk of his work is dominated by ideas, very often recorded at the moment of their conception. His most characteristic attitude is that of a man bending over a flower, a crystal, an incident, a detail and discovering not only the beauty of the part, but through it the harmony of the world, its structure, its laws, its meaning. This Platonic opening-up of the closed world into a transcendent reality which is immanently present in every particular detail, is the typical moment in Jünger's thinking and in his life, as the diaries show. This, and not the moment of death or extreme danger alone—as Stern supposes—is his "existential" moment. Thus Jünger has sensed the profound and all-embracing analogy of being, not as a philosopher, it is true, but as an observer of our world.

Now, let us suppose a critic who is at home in some period of the late nineteenth century applies the principles and the methods of literary criticism, purely aesthetic principles, to Jünger's entire work. He will judge it as most defective and below the standards. He will not believe the discoveries, the beauty and reality of what Jünger perceives beyond the particular details and mistake it for "abstraction." He will not even know what the analogy of being is and mistake it for a "pattern." He will not see that there is really something unprecedented in our modern world and that it calls for an adequate expression, not only for silence and prayer. Finally he will not raise the urgent objections and criticisms, point to the false generalizations or the erroneous deduction or the lack of criteria and sound first principles in the light of which Jünger himself should have evaluated his images and experiences.

This is, broadly speaking, Stern's situation as a critic. Even apart from his various misunderstandings and misreadings, he has neither seen the good nor the bad in the writer he chose to criticize.

JOSEF SCHWARZ

Book Reviews

Poetry and Prayer

Poets and Mystics. By E. I. Watkin. Sheed and Ward. \$5.00.

THE well-known English author of *The Bow in the Clouds* and *A Philosophy of Form* here gathers into one volume a variety of essays on English poets and mystics. Only the first chapter, "Poetry and Mysticism," touches the issue directly. The other twelve chapters are often interesting and informative, occasionally undistinguished pieces on such diverse figures as Shakespeare ("He wanted art"), the Puritan Thomas Goodwin, who wrote on the devotion to the Sacred Heart, Dame Juliana of Norwich, Margery Kempe (that boisterous wyf of Lynn), William and Richard Crashaw, Dom August Baker, John Smith the Platonist, and others.

The first essay, already alluded to, is closely reasoned and written, and its definitions and distinctions operate more or less throughout the volume. It seems to me better, therefore to digest and discuss it than to scatter remarks over the contents of the entire book.

Readers of earlier books and essays by Mr. Watkin will be prepared for the author's Platonic approach to the subject of poetry and mysticism. For Watkin there are two types of intuitive knowledge, the clear and abstract intuitions of the logician and mathematician, the organ of which he calls, using Claudel's term, *animus*, and the obscure and concrete intuitions of the poet and religious man, which he calls, like Claudel, *anima*. In actual experience these two types of intuition work together, yet they are separable, and the province of art and mysticism is the latter's. Poetry is "obscure intuition of significant form."

The mystic's experience is an act of union with God. This is quite different from the poet's experience. It is a difference of depth which is wide enough to make the two experiences really distinct in nature. Nor can the artistic-aesthetic intuition of significant form and the mystical intuition of union with a Reality "Formless because exceeding all forms," be fused into one and the same experience. Each excludes the other. Yet aesthetic-artistic experience involves, the author is convinced, "a background awareness, though it is extremely indistinct, indeed subconscious rather than conscious, of the Presence of Divine Reality and of the soul's union with it." Normally both intuitions cannot be fully conscious at the same time, though it may be possible for them to be so. The author says he does not know of any evidence allowing of a certain answer in the matter. Even the *Noche Oscura* of St. John of the Cross does not seem to him a clear-cut instance.

In this connection Watkin makes a valuable distinction: while artistic intuition is the substance of art, mystical intuition is only the accident of mystical prayer, the substance of it being the union of the soul with God. Contemplation is only a by-product.

Aesthetic contemplation, he points out, does not directly alter the moral character of the subject, though our employment of it may unite us more closely with God. Similarly, aesthetic sensibility does not characterize mystics as such, though it may do so. And mystical experience of a lower order may

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characterize a poet, Wordsworth for example, though when it occurs it is as distinct from his aesthetic intuition as is a supernaturally mystical union. Almost all mystics are sensitive to beauty, "and the artist, the poet, because the forms he contemplates [one wonders whether the poet can always be described as a contemplator of forms], are significant of the ideal world and its spiritual realities, points beyond himself to the mystic who even be himself in another aspect and on a deeper psychological level." The poet, moreover, whether he composes in verse or in prose, "provides the symbols which suggest the Indescribable Reality the mystic knows."

Prayer can liberate us from the pain of existence, while art and poetry can effect a cathartic purification by their visions of "Good at the heart of things." Now, therefore, more than ever before in the history of man, Watkin concludes, "the society of poets and mystics should be welcome, as the former invite us to repose and refresh ourselves with the spectacle of beauty, the reflection of God's glory, the latter to climb ourselves the mount of transfiguration, where humanity is glorified, deified with His glory." Prayer and poetry are alike a service of joy.

It is a closely packed, clarifying essay, with a precision and discursive density that are lacking in most of the rest of the book, interesting as much of it is. In the estimation of the present reviewer the essays on Richard Crashaw and on his father's influence on him are the next most noteworthy chapters in the volume, scholarly and thoughtful pieces of writing.

VICTOR M. HAMM

Work of A Wanderer

The Quest of Alain-Fournier. By Robert Gibson. Yale University Press. \$4.00

THIS biography of Alain-Fournier by the English writer, Robert Gibson, is a work of devotion and scrupulous care. It is the first to appear in English. The one novel of Alain-Fournier, *Le Grand Meaulnes* (*The Wanderer*) was published in 1913, the same year as *Du Côté de chez Swann* by Proust. It has gone through many editions in French, has been translated into four or five languages, and has become a kind of minor classic. It by no means ranks with the great French novels, but it does hold an honorable second place in company with *Dominique* by Fromentin, with *Paul et Virginie* by St. Pierre, with *Adolphe* by Constant. It has been compared with Nerval's *Sylvie* and with medieval tales of chivalry. It has been attacked as a good example of escapist literature, as "tedious and insignificant" by Henry de Montherlant, but on the whole it has been praised for the analysis it makes of late adolescence, of the mingling of dream and reality, of love and adventure. Critical praise has centered especially on the first part of the novel, which for many readers forms a complete whole, and which deals with a dream-like picture of an inaccessible girl.

The dual purpose of the study by Mr. Gibson is to present all the available biographical material on Henri Alain-Fournier, and to analyze the extent with which this material provides the primary source of the novel, *Le Grand Meaulnes*. Most of the book is devoted to pure biography which is fully substantiated by reference to and quotation from the rich correspondence of Alain-Fournier with his closest friend, Jacques Rivière. Martin Turnell's recent

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study of Rivière would serve as a useful adjunct to this study of Alain-Fournier. Whereas Mr. Turnell emphasizes the historical moment, the first decades of the century, Mr. Gibson emphasizes the life story of Alain-Fournier, his childhood and family, his education and ambitions as a writer, his friendship with Rivière and Péguy.

Despite its marked focus on biography, this book sustains a constant relationship between the life of Alain-Fournier and the novel for which he will be remembered. The characters of *Le Grand Meaulnes* lead an enchanted existence. They look ahead to some ineffable dream. A simple memory plunges them into this dream. They become one with the décor of the dream and thereby stimulate the imaginations and hearts of the readers. The value of Mr. Gibson's study is to show how Alain-Fournier tried to join the dream experience of his adolescent heroes and the world of reality around them. The cult of memory dominates all the characters. They are obsessed by a lack of faith in happiness, but by uniting with one another their action in life can be all the stronger, all the more vibrant.

The secret of this mysterious book may never be fully revealed. Meaulnes' sin is perhaps his refusal of happiness. His despair grows poignant when his early happiness and his early delight with nature disappear. He learns to refuse happiness and even to cultivate a certain degree of cruelty. In creating this subtle change of character, Fournier learned which details to omit and which to incorporate in his story. The literary creation grows in clarity as the life history of the novelist reveals his hesitations, his ideals, and his dramas.

Bennington College

WALLACE FOWLIE

Religion in the Third Republic

Histoire religieuse de la France contemporaine, sous la Troisième République.
Volume II. By Adrien Dansette. Paris: Flammarion.

IN THE years of his greatest activity, Péguy took a fierce delight in mercilessly attacking the anemic yet obstinate doctrinaire historians of his generation, men such as Lavissee and Seignobos. Here is an historian who would have escaped the blows of Péguy, receiving instead his vigorous approval.

Adrien Dansette continues in this volume the work begun with his account of the religious history of France from the Revolution to the Third Republic. He will conclude his study with an examination of the religious history of France since 1930, which he regards as a turning point in the history of modern France. Dansette's contribution is manifold. The political and religious history told here with skill and precision is not without a sense of personal engagement which gives the study its power. Dansette has real competence in depicting the social structure of the Church and of his nation and their changing patterns during the Third Republic. He has, above all, an unusual faculty for making critical decisions which make his history a significant work. This talent is especially evident in the sureness with which Dansette divides his work, cutting out the major periods of the religious history of France. His chronology becomes of critical interpretive importance. The three-part division of this volume will probably long remain the accepted approach to this history. Seen by Dansette, the religious history of the Third Republic has three major phases. The

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first conforming to the first book of this volume, encompasses the period 1879-1899, marked by the failure of conciliation between the Church and modern society, a failure epitomized by the aborted response to the advice of Leo XIII. The second period is the years 1899-1914, a time essentially governed by the renewal of the near-mortal conflict between the Church and the State. Here Dansette singles for attention, and for personal though censure, the intransigence of Pius X. The third and final epoch exhibits a partial success in the conciliation of the Church and modern society, a *rapprochement* accomplished in the years 1914-1930. Dansette's intimate knowledge of this history is revealed by his examination of the debates in the Legislature, by his knowing quotations from the literature and memoirs of this time, by his original use of private archives which illustrate aspects of history not yet open in the official archives. Thus his sympathetic, polemical account of Marc Sangnier, the founder of *Le Sillon*, not only draws upon the tribute of Mauriac to his one-time master but utilizing the correspondence of the secretary-general of *Le Sillon*, dramatically recalls the bishops who, on the eve of Sangnier's censure from Rome, were affectionately addressing this broken apostle as "le camarade évêque."

Dansette's book is indispensable to the historian of modern France and to the historian of her literature. The value of this study to the literary historian may be illustrated by a reference to a minor event which has been preserved in the literature of the time. This is the fire in the Charity Bazaar in May, 1897 which aroused Léon Bloy to his unbelievable, uncharitable attack on the victims of the holocaust. Bloy, it may be recalled, rejoiced at the justice of God whom he conceived of as engulfing in sacred flames those who flaunted their wealth and benevolence to the poor. In rage, Bloy wrote, "This so natural thought: 'God strikes, therefore He strikes with justice,' came to the mind of no one, or if it did, it was at once cast aside with horror." Dansette, out of the storehouse of his knowledge of this time and without specific reference to Bloy, also chooses this fire as of symbolic significance in the religious history of France. He recalls that the universal horror occasioned by the terrible fire led even the government momentarily to drop its hostility, to the extent that Félix Faure attended the solemn service in Notre Dame. There, some one other than Bloy believed that the fire was a moment revealing God's justice. The renowned Père Ollivier took the occasion to describe the flames as God's punishment to a Republican society. The protest which this sermon aroused in the Chamber seems to Dansette indicative that the period of appeasement between Catholics and the Republic was coming to a close. France was on the eve of the Dreyfus Affair and the Republican vengeance of Emile Combes against the ancient Church.

There is much that may be quarreled with in Dansette's study, for nothing is more certain of this period than its constant and soul-searching divisions between rightists and leftist in the Chamber and in the Church. Dansette is most disturbing in his lack of sympathy for the intransigents who could not accept the Republic. He hardly grants them the virtue of remembering times past, which were not without grandeur, and he comes near to denying them a freedom which even the Third Republic should have sustained, the freedom to dissent.

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Between Thorns and Rocks

The Faith and Modern Man. By Romano Guardini. Pantheon Books. \$2.75.

ROMANO GUARDINI, born of Italian parents in Germany, is a writer who combines the tendency of the German to be searching and methodical with the clarity of the Latin. In German, as well as in this excellent translation, one is always amazed at Guardini's sure-footed leadership through the thorniest and rockiest problems of the supernatural and the natural. With a sure grasp and a steady hand, in deceptively simple language, Guardini eliminates all confusing verbiage and approaches his problem steadily and engagingly. Guardini is not only a consummate theologian, but a first rate psychologist, and is well informed in the fields of history, literature, science, and sociology. No one—with perhaps the exception of Jacques Maritain—has such a hold on the problems uppermost in the mind of modern man.

His description of the different ages of man, the resulting crises of the faith, and their causes is a classic. No one has ever given a more Biblical explanation of the Christian meaning of Providence. Among Catholics Guardini—and his growing school—holds a unique position in his complete disregard of post-Tridentine apologetics, in his refusal to be sectarian, his lack of scholastic pretense and in his constant return to the person of our Lord. You always know that he has studied St. Thomas and patristic theology and that he is familiar with the mystics of old as well as of our own day, but there is no appeal to them, no quoting of dusted-off authorities, no quarreling or "opinionating." Guardini seems to lead you back to the prime source of Revelation with reason endowed by grace.

His critics have often reproached him for being interested only in marginal issues and less in God than in the phenomenon of religion and have even seen in him a refined and irenic agnostic. How wrong they were! This book, like the forthcoming English translation of his *magnum opus*, shows a Catholicity that is so honest, so orthodox, so moderate, so profound that I would not hesitate to call him the bringer of a twentieth century "devotio moderna."

We should have more of Guardini. His quiet voice, like those of Otto Karrer, Lortz, Rahner, should be heard in America.

H. A. REINHOLD

Greene and the Ghetto

Graham Greene. By Jacques Madaule. Paris: Editions du Temps Présent.

WRITTEN some time ago, this critical analysis of the work of Graham Greene does not contain as yet an appreciation of *The End of the Affair* or *The Living Room*, but it deserves consideration as a competent discussion of an English Catholic writer by a French Catholic critic, known for his two books on Paul Claudel. The continuing point of interest is the reaction of a son of the "oldest daughter of the Church" to the Catholic "realism" of a British convert who protests against the smug Anglo-Saxon, post-Puritan, liberal, optimistic-religious indifferentism no less than against the "criminal" and "absurd," "ghetto"-attitude of the Catholic minority which is aloof from every-

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thing not parochial, in the belief of saving their souls precisely by this type of secular indifferentism. Although Madaule brands Greene as "not sufficiently permeated by Christianity," one feels that he is delighted to discover in England such a serious, quasi-French approach, so different from that rather shallow British "humor" which characterizes the converts from Chesterton to Bruce Marshall and Evelyn Waugh, an intellectual attitude which the French cannot stand.

Madaule is pleased, indeed, to find in Graham Greene a mind akin to Mauriac and Julien Green since he does not avoid the fundamental, serious implications of sex, pride, and cruelty which in the Catholic world have repercussions in trauma conditioned pride-forms of chastity (Pinkie Brown's *aigre virginité*), catastrophic self-reliance and overstressing of free will versus grace (Scobie—in Madaule's interpretation) and complacent, inhuman, loveless pharisaism (Louise; the sodality woman in prison with the Mexican priest).

Madaule applies to Greene's creation the same criteria as he discovered in Claudel's work: first, a factor which appears to human experience like a kind of fatality but equals the Christian discovery that "God writes straight in crooked lines"; second, the *Etiam peccata* of St. Augustine implying that God uses also the sins of man for the purpose of his salvation. In the latter point, Madaule backs up Greene full-heartedly. His interpretation perhaps advertises too strongly Léon Bloy's conviction that honesty is with the fallen girl rather than with the "decent" bourgeois-woman, and he certainly overdoes in connivance with Greene Baudelaire's "conscience dans le mal" as the Catholic dignity versus the "innocent" drift of the "happy" life of the non-Catholic.

Madaule, actually, finds all the specific French preoccupations in the novels of this Englishman. He is fascinated particularly by Greene's gift of showing realistically the borderline between the Catholics and those outside the Church, and without any "arrière-monde": the latter do not know about the towering truths and mysteries of Christianity. These values may appear vulgarly and repulsively in an underworld of Catholic criminals, but they are still there. The decent people in the world of liberal platitude, however, are "outside," since they do not share with these Catholic sinners the mysterious conviction of the reality of the "sea of flames" in hell, the need of prayer of others, the knowledge of the *character indelebilis* in the unworthy priest and the abomination of a sacrilegious Communion; they have not prayed like them before plaster saints, have not lighted candles, and have not committed "mortal" sins. From this climate even the Anglo-Catholics are excluded despite their incense and neo-Gothic churches. For having brought out this point in black and white, Graham Greene has paid, according to Madaule, a heavy toll; he has sacrificed the verisimilitude of his characters. But accustomed to the French *raisonneur* and the typical Balzacian hero, Madaule sees no difficulty in assuming that the protagonists of Graham Greene must be granted a symbolic character. Thus they even gain in spiritual, if not in literary, importance. "Le symbole nous achemine vers le sacrement," the latter statement being a little flimsy. Madaule proves his thesis better by the symbolic interpretation of Greene's heroes as *hommes traqués*, men who are chased not by the police or jealous women but by the "Hound of Heaven." (This fundamental symbolism, says Madaule, makes even the crude naturalistic scenes appear *sub specie aeternitatis* and makes Grace and the Invisible Order, hovering over

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all, unexplained and unexplainable frustrations, adulteries, sacrileges, murders, and suicides.) In the case of Scobie the roles are even reversed, and Scobie hunts and mistreats God given into his hands. Here the dizzy interpretations bring us near the climate of the Encyclical *Miserentissimus Deus*.

I find Madaule exceptionally competent when he includes in his Interpretation the hunted man's hunt for a peace inaccessible on earth with women of all kinds as the illusionary prey. They are only crooked ways to the overtures of Grace (Elizabeth for Andreas, Rose for Pinkie). The experience all the heroes are bound to have with women is that in that inextricable compound of pity and desire, which they provoke and return, desire seems to become the entrance to the world of hatred, and pity that to the world of love. The ticklish point in author and interpreter is the elusive range of such concepts as mercy, sacrifice for others, and purity. For instance, Rose is said to possess "une innocence pourrie," the "innocent" Helen to be consoled only by carnal caresses of a "good" Samaritan to save her from the worst—despair. But Madaule comments that a woman in her simplicity may truly help man in his *angoisse* in a hostile world as an image of the Virgin Mary, as well as hindering the development of a more desirable metaphysical anguish than the one she is capable of conjuring. Fundamentally, as in Claudel, says Madaule, so also in Greene's novels, woman is the promise which cannot be fulfilled, since "Celui qui aime Dieu d'une certaine façon, ne peut aimer aucune femme comme elle souhaite d'être aimée."

Madaule is also struck by Greene's ideological temptation that a man may renounce his own salvation to the advantage of the salvation of others, an idea reminiscent of Péguy and Gertrud von Le Fort and of the liturgical solidarism. But he has the good sense to brand this concept—at least on the non-mystical level—a military rather than a spiritual idea, and to declare that the Christian cannot be a generous or a "just" man since he is required to be first of all a saint. Therefore Scobie appears to Madaule less a tragic than a grotesque character.

Madaule seems to see in Graham Greene the faithful witness of tragic times, as Greene was called by his other French critic, Paul Rostenne. He shows an unavowed preference for cataclysms which give Christianity a better chance than smoother periods of rationalism and humanitarianism, periods which seem simply incompatible with faith, charity and hope, since earthly happiness and "peace" as "un paradis pour quelques privilégiés" are actually achieved for the "Victorian" concept of life. Despite this almost aggressive spiritualism discovered and shared in Greene, Madaule finds it gratifying that Greene has nothing at all in common with Bernanos. He leaves no doubt that he prefers the brutal but normal, unembellished novel of the sinners to the no less true but exceptional novel of the saints. To those who object to the sensuous aspects of Greene's work, Madaule replies: They are not aware that Catholicism includes a knowledge of Evil which is a spiritual dimension. To save this hair-splitting distinction, Madaule opposes a supernatural pneumatology to an ordinary psychology in Greene's novels. But nobody in the world of experience has an organ for such discriminations! Madaule seems to be right, however, when he concludes: "Nulle vision plus catholique des choses que cette immense solidarité des bons et des méchants à laquelle les bien-pensants espèrent échapper par la décence extérieure." Madaule's preoccupations throughout his

whole criticism are more spiritual than literary. It is on a spiritual level, therefore, that Madaule defines the meaning of Graham Greene's work: to remind the Christians of their immense responsibilities. The book has not been superseded, but only complemented, by the more recent French appreciation of Graham Greene by Victor de Pange (Editions universitaires, 1953).

A. HUNTCAMP

Problems of a Catholic Writer

The Complex Fate. By Marius Bewley. With an Introduction and two Interpolations by F. R. Leavis. Grove Press. \$5.00.

THESE essays, all but one of which have previously appeared in *Scrutiny*, are exceptional both in quality and importance. Marius Bewley finds the major American achievement in letters not in the fictions of the Hair-on-the-Chest or "Frontier" School—who claim Whitman and Mark Twain as ultimate forefathers with Hemingway and his epigones as immediate ancestors—but in the writing of men in an entirely different tradition: Cooper, Hawthorne, Melville, and James. Although the latter novelists have had no considerable successors, their own work possesses enduring value; and even their semi-failures may prove eventually more interesting and fecund than the more facile and flashy "successes" of the neoprimitives currently so fashionable.

Mr. Bewley devotes the greater part of his book to a close and illuminating analysis of the influence which most insistently pervaded the art and thought of Henry James: that of Hawthorne. It is as profoundly present in the novels of his old age (e.g., *The Golden Bowl*) as in his apprentice work of the 60's and 70's. Even in those stories (e.g., *The Last of the Valeris*) in which he appears to have drawn directly from European models, it is to Hawthorne that he owes the inspiration for his themes and their treatments. That there exists, between *The Wings of the Dove* and *The Marble Faun* as between *The Bostonians* and *The Blithedale Romance*, a relationship in no sense casual, Mr. Bewley demonstrates with a sure and convincing touch.

The "complex fate" (the term is James's) is that of being an American. Neither Hawthorne nor James was able to adjust himself satisfactorily to life in nineteenth-century United States, even though both of them passionately believed that they belonged (or at least *ought* to belong) to America in a way that they could not possibly belong to Europe. The American, they both felt, ought to possess some innate and overwhelming moral superiority to the European, who was perhaps somewhat culpably overburdened with the past, the lack of which gave America a literary atmosphere of almost unbreathable "thinness." It is certain that, in the stories both of James and of Hawthorne, it is, generally speaking, the Americans and not the Europeans who are intended to have morally the best of it.

This tension was never completely resolved in either writer, although the results were admirable in that part of their work in which proper balance was attained: in the best of James' "international" tales; in the best of Hawthorne's stories permeated by a New England past (it was only in a "colonial" setting that he felt really free to deal with the contemporary scene). For the opposition

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is not merely that of Europe and America: it is also that of past and present, of reality and appearance.

We are thus led to consideration of what remains a central problem in the work of James, a problem inherited from Hawthorne, that of a certain moral ambiguity which has confused many critics. In a novel such as *What Maisie Knew*, Mr. Bewley maintains, James has arrived at a satisfying solution at a level which is ethically as well as esthetically acceptable (Mr. Leavis, while sharing Mr. Bewley's high opinion of this book, disagrees—erroneously, I think—with his interpretation of it). But in such a story as *The Liar*, the really important question which the reader must ask himself (though it seems not to have occurred to previous critics) is: *who is the liar?* At times (e.g., in *The Turn of the Screw* and *The Golden Bowl*) appearance and reality are wrenched so violently and so far apart, the moral ambiguity so thickened, that, not alone for the reader but for the author as well, moral values seem almost to have forfeited form and consistency. Into *The Turn of the Screw*, for example, Mr. Bewley and Mr. Leavis read meanings not merely divergent but sharply antithetical.

A clue to this ambiguity, Mr. Bewley suggests, is ascertainable, perhaps, in the circumstance that James shared his brother's pragmatic convictions to an extent not commonly noticed because not explicitly manifest; that for many years he had, as he said, "unconsciously pragmatized." It would indeed be surprising if an artist and moralist even so considerable as Henry James could "pragmatize" for any very long time with impunity.

The other essays in this volume, on "Some Aspects of American Poetry," "The Poetry of Wallace Stevens," "Mencken and the American Language," and "Kenneth Burke as a Literary Critic," while shorter and concerned with lesser figures, are brilliant and relevant. In Stevens Mr. Bewley sees the principal American poet since Eliot. The essay on Mencken, while emphasizing the perils of the present cult of anarchy in language, goes far to explain why, in the days when Mr. Mencken was dictator not only of the American dictionary but of American letters as well, he was more entertaining than satisfying. And the tragic truth about Kenneth Burke would appear to be that, victim of his Marxist formation, he is not really interested in literature at all.

But—you may inquire—what bearing has such a book, however excellent, upon a Catholic literary renaissance and the problems of the Catholic writer? I am convinced that it has a great deal.

First of all, a direct bearing: the essay on "Some Aspects of Modern American Poetry" includes a valuable analysis of the achievement to date of Robert Lowell as Catholic poet. While conceding Lowell's importance and his very real talent, Mr. Bewley observes that, in general, appreciation of this poet's work has been more fulsome than luminous. He does not yet appear, poetically speaking, altogether at home in the Church: his use of Catholic symbolism and imagery is, more often than not, still awkward and unsure. Mr. Bewley quotes, among other things, the following lines from *A Prayer for my Grandfather to Our Lady*:

O Mother, I implore
Your scorched blue thunderbreasts of love to pour
Buckets of blessings on my burning head
Until I rise like Lazarus from the dead:
Lavabis nos et super nivem delabor.

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Our critic's analysis, on pages 161-162, of these infelicitous lines, goes to the heart of the difficulty. Mr. Lowell is, of course, a relatively young poet with potentialities for authentic greatness. Unqualified praise is not likely to be of much service to him. The present essay provides, therefore, a useful corrective to contemporary over-estimates of his work.

But this book has a further bearing, and at a more profound level, upon the problems of the Catholic writer. Like Henry James, his is a complex fate; for to be a Catholic is quite as difficult (or, on a lower plane, quite as easy) as to be an American. Like James, he is member of a cultural minority; and he is, as creative artist, subject to comparable dangers. For the Catholic (and especially for the Catholic writer) as for James, the problem of America versus Europe, of present versus past, of appearance versus reality, poses itself with an insistence which cannot successfully be evaded. For him as for James, these tensions are a source of immediate "practical" difficulty and of possible ultimate enrichment. No more than James is he able (in spite of the clearly defined, authoritative and immutable truths upon which the Catholic faith is founded) to avoid certain moral ambiguities, as we find them, for instance, in the Catholic novels of Evelyn Waugh and Graham Greene. The quality of the "pity" in such a book as *The Heart of the Matter* is a case in point.

Nor is this all. I believe that, given these tensions and the ambiguities consequent upon them, the Catholic writer is more likely to find, for his own purposes, the tradition stemming from Cooper, Hawthorne, Melville, and James more valuable and more rewarding than that represented by the currently fashionable productions of the Hard Boiled School. He has, I am convinced, more to learn (and something far superior in quality) from the one than from the other. It is obvious that a writer such as Julien Green, who like James has made effective use of the supernatural to express what he had to say, would hardly find in the techniques of neo-naturalism an instrument adequate for his literary purposes. If the Catholic spirit is to manifest itself in any significant way in contemporary letters, it must do so, I think, at a level more meaningful than that of surface realism. Nor is it likely that, after denial and abolition of the mind, the spirit can subsist on a diet of sensation alone.

It is, then, necessary for the Catholic writer to know, appreciate, and assimilate the major American achievement in letters. And if he wishes fully to understand and possess it, he cannot afford to neglect Marius Bewley's contribution toward a critical understanding of it.

Hobart College

JOHN H. MEYER

Marcel's Limitations

Les Cœurs avides. By Gabriel Marcel. Paris: La Table Ronde.

THIS is a new printing of Marcel's *La Soif*, written in 1937 and previously published in 1938. The subject is the one common to almost all of Marcel's plays: the anguish of family life devoid of love. It is love for which the hearts of the title are thirsting. By a gesture at the very close of the play we are led to believe they may eventually find it.

The sameness of the pattern in these plays of Marcel is an index of the

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limitations of his creative vision. This domestic universe is a bleak gray, unrelieved by either humor or tenderness. The various aspects of the selfishness which shuts out love are subtly delineated, but the final impact is one of social and psychological criticism and not of poetry.

I suspect that Marcel's theater will prove to have its highest value in its totality rather than in the individual plays. The entire corpus constitutes perhaps our most vital literary examination of the problems of marriage and the family. This constant testimony to the abiding power of love is a moving and forceful reality in the reading. Whether *Les Cœurs avides* would register the same impact in the theater is a more debatable question.

Fordham University

ERWIN W. GEISSMAN

Passion and Disillusion

Le Dieu Nu. By Robert Margerit. Paris: Gallimard.

LE DIEU NU, Robert Margerit's most recent novel, is dedicated to love, as the title indicates. A quotation taken from Richepin's *Mythologie grecque* explains the source of its inspiration: "L'amour fut la première divinité, le Dieu nu des Phéniciens: incarnation du principe de vie." In this novel Bruno, a restless intellectual, recalls in his journal the memories of his erotic past. These memories evoke his strange passion for three women. In his exposition of these loves Margerit follows the pattern of most French novelists by giving a minimum of action and a maximum of candid introspection.

The first and most influential of Bruno's inamoratas is his older sister, Marité. She dominates him through his love and admiration for her beauty and brilliance. Marité is an amoral, passionate, disturbing creature, the incarnation of all luxuries—sentimental, sensual, and intellectual. She is convinced that the world was born with her and will die with her. She is intolerant of any weakness and considers it her prerogative to direct the people in her orbit.

Bruno also finds himself mysteriously drawn to Jacqueline as to a magnet. Her frailty and sadness attract him. Jacqueline is unhappily married to a man of her father's choice. Bruno's journal is largely concerned with the genesis, paroxysm, and "decrystallization" of his love for Jacqueline. The "decrystallization" is the result of Jacqueline's faithfulness to her religious vows. To Bruno such conduct is superstitious and provincial.

Helen, the third member of the trio, is a resolute, self-assured, spirited young lady, ready and willing to make every sacrifice for Bruno's love.

If the novel has a lesson, it is a purely worldly one. After his bitter experiences in the war, Bruno, like many of his generation who believed in the perfectibility of society and in civilization, has become disillusioned. He expresses the hope that society will destroy itself. The question of his personal survival or destruction is of no consequence. His only salvation is his belief in "la merveilleuse richesse des créatures." Only one thing can change its form and objective and still keep its vigor and that thing is love for human beings and for love. There is no suggestion of a Love that transcends human love.

College of New Rochelle

JOSEPHINE VALLERIE

Paganism on Tip-toe

The Poetry of T. S. Eliot. By D. E. S. Maxwell. London: Routledge and Kegan Paul.

THIS book makes the same kind of demands as Eliot does in his own work. That is to say, it is the best book on Eliot so far. Nevertheless, Maxwell is primarily interested in religion and ideas; the ideal critic of Eliot's work has yet to appear. Maxwell's view of Eliot's religion appears to be that Eliot is a Manichean for whom "in Western civilization the primitive instincts find their most spiritual embodiment in Christianity." This may explain why Eliot finds it expedient to mingle some Buddhism with his Christianity. Like Reinhold Niebhuur, Eliot appears to be in that company which asserts that "for the spiritual man natural law does not exist." In this view the entire natural world is the kingdom of the demonic. And it was this view, in juxtaposition with the Christian doctrine of the Incarnation, which bred up the numerous group of gnostic heresies. The elaborate doctrines of William Blake, for example, contain little that was not native to early gnosticism. And the same is true of Jung's psychology. At any rate, Christianity seen as paganism on tip-toe is Maxwell's general view of Eliot's religion. And by this knowledge of pagan ritual Maxwell is able to elucidate several poems. *Sweeney among the Nightingales*, for example, so closely linked to the *Waste Land*, he is able to relate in detail to Egyptian rituals of Isis and Osiris. Eliot has always insisted on the relevance of modern anthropology to an understanding of his poetry. To have fused the rituals of primitive earth cults with Christian liturgy may well emerge to posterity as the contemporary achievement of Eliot, as it has become the ambition of David Jones in his *Anathemata*. Jones writes as a Catholic. But it is not certain what sense Eliot attributes to the central Christian doctrines.

The wheel and the point, the rose and the yew tree, fur and faeces, have their location in pre-Christian symbolism. At least Eliot has made a more consistent effort to lend a Christian air to these themes. Charles Williams and C. S. Lewis mining the same vein have come up with more starkly pagan fare. Modern anthropology has brought the ancient pagan lore to the surface today to a degree unexampled since Constantine. And the arts have appropriated this pagan matter with astonishing results.

Modern Catholics, nurtured in the culture of Cartesian rationalism, haven't a clue to these developments in the arts. The patristic attitude to these questions offers uncertain guides to us. As long as the pagan cults were official religion a Christian had a clear-cut course. Even for the Fathers, however, the status of learning and the human disciplines was confusing. But the Augustinian view of the two cities cannot do for us today. The Thomist cannot regard either the human body nor the body politic as a mere obstacle to salvation. For us, the question is at least as complicated as Eliot's poetry. And led by a skilful guide through its pagan and Christian labyrinths, the Catholic will discover some of the dimensions of the problems of Christian culture and the old paganism. Maxwell's book is the best yet for this purpose.

University of Toronto

H. MARSHALL McLUHAN

BOOK REVIEWS

Poetry and Pathos

The Complete Poems of Lionel Johnson. Edited with an Introduction and Textual Notes by Iaian Fletcher. London: Unicorn Press.

COMPETENT critical evaluation cannot proceed unless there are good editions of primary materials. The present volume was much needed. It is far more inclusive and scholarly than the edition of 1915 by Ezra Pound, who did not introduce any textual notes whatsoever.

Johnson is a minor poet, but even a minor poet deserves his due. Belonging to that small band of converts of the 1890's, including Dowson, Beardsley, and Wilde, he in some ways was akin to that "tragic generation" (to use Yeats' phrase) and in other ways he was strangely apart from them. Louis Imogen Guiney wrote of him as "a tower of wholesomeness in the decadence which his short life spanned," and Katherine Tynan spoke of his poetry as "like the intrusion of a ghostly little monk into a circle of godless Bohemians of the nineties."

"A traditionalist of traditionalists," his principal themes were the classics and certain institutions, Winchester and Oxford and particularly after his conversion in 1891 the Roman Catholic Church to which he eventually wedded the Irish Revival. In certain respects his traditionalism became a retreat because one can detect an increasing tendency toward the twilight of dream. No matter what excellencies there are, it must be admitted that his poetry has special limitations. Certainly it has little passion, lyrical rapture, spontaneous exaltation. Rather it is aloof, detached, chilled, marmoreal, austere, dignified, severe, restrained, and impersonal—a very orderly and disciplined art.

And why? The secret of his poetry is eventually the secret of his life, and Iaian Fletcher in a valuable introduction helps to suggest the reason. There are some who will not thank him for drawing back the veil which has hidden Johnson's tragedy, but it is important for us to understand the causes of the limitations of his poetry. It has long been known that his life was at variance with his art and that he drank himself to an early death, but the cause has never been revealed in print. Johnson was not one of those who ordinarily "publish their wistfulness abroad" and there is the ominous saying of his that "respectability is the best policy."

At Winchester and Oxford, Johnson was aware of homosexual tendencies and the rest of his life became an effort—very heroic and morally successful—to sublimate his native tendencies. Once this is understood many of the limitations of his verse take on a pathos and become understandable. In the words of Fletcher, "Mentally he had become mature at the age of twenty; physically and emotionally his growth ended at the age of sixteen . . . accounting not only for the lack of development in his poetry, but also for that accent of resolved melancholy which remains the most characteristic note." Turning his back on experience, he tended more and more—in his poetry as well as in his own life—to retreat into the stability of institutions and then finally into a world of dreams.

But it was a dreamland that also became a nightmare. It is significant that in his retreat into alcoholism as an escape—for he tended more and more to live in a Bacchic haze—he found it possible at the same time to detach himself with an almost frightening asceticism.

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Those poems which everyone recognizes as his greatest—such poems as "The Dark Angel," "The Precept of Silence," "Mystic and Cavalier," and a few others—are those where the tension between good and evil is faced, where the cry is from the depths. In these he speaks out of his experience and they constitute the poems by which he will always be known.

Further, Fletcher also clarifies the mystery surrounding Johnson's death (even the obituary in *The Academy* and the article in the DNB by Campbell Dodgson, one of his closets friends, are misleading). His introduction is a very balanced one, weighing carefully both strengths and weaknesses, an admirable exercise in critical acumen.

He succeeds in adding some fifty previously uncollected poems to the 1915 edition, though most of these are minor. Since Johnson had a habit of writing verses on fly-leaves of books (and his library was dispersed at his death) they were not easy to collect. Fletcher dates several poems previously undated and his textual notes give variant readings, identify many of the dedications and references, and introduce sources and parallels. He makes especially good use of certain hitherto unused materials such as British Museum Add. MS. 46363, the MS. Journal of Stopford Brooke, and unpublished letters to Jepson, Lane, and Gosse. The notes are not absolutely complete, and American readers would find particularly useful the identification of additional place-names, especially the Welsh ones. The bibliography is a selective one, to which additions might be made (the printed Paris dissertation *Lionel Johnson: Poète et Critique*, by Arthur W. Patrick for instance) and an index of first lines would be helpful. But there is so much that is new in the volume that these are but minor qualifications.

What is needed now is a critical biography of the poet against the background of the nineties.

JOHN PICK

Emmanuel's Bridge

Car enfin je vous aime. By Pierre Emmanuel. Paris: Editions du Seuil.

PIERRE EMMANUEL is a pseudonym which a Christian poet and essayist affixed almost intuitively to his first long poem: *Christ au Tombeau*: "Rock" espoused to "God," the Word, but "Rock" essentially inert and hermetic; two names brought together to symbolize not only the inner distress of man and the struggle of creation itself, but also the very vocation of the poet and the ultimate and fulgent victory of the Risen Word. The first novel of such a man calls for full, reverent, and charitable attention.

In verses of Yeats used as an epigraph to the novel, two weary lovers face a parting. Passion has gone dead; but "souls are love, and a continual farewell." The unsubstantial quality of the autumnal romanticism and theological vagueness of these verses of "Ephemera" are, however, only shadows of what is to come in the novel—the 87-page "grey notebook" in which Déodat, the narcissist intellectual, describes his love affair with Laurence from a "brief encounter" in a provincial town, through an autumn of adultery, and to Laurence's calm and deliberate departure in November. This end was a beginning—a beginning of the lyricism and verbalizations of the grey notebook. From being a prostitu-

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tion of the body, his affair with Laurence becomes, in the writing, a prostitution of the mind. The real theme loses itself in the variations (false sublimation, psychological analysis, fascination of words). Déodat thinks, however, that in exploring in retrospect his life of the senses he is making eternal the love of two human souls and deepening his understanding of a "mystery of analogy"—God's love for man and man's love for God. In doing so he uses terms like "grace," "the lost Eden," "incarnation," "absolute," "God," "Love"—words with haloes but without theological contour.

In this almost clinical record of a disintegrated personality, we find a sense of abyss and of grandeur like Pascal's; philosophical concepts faintly echoing Claudel's ("knowing" and "naming," pre-established harmony); effusions, paradoxes and a *mystique* of the senses which sound like Gide. But above all we find the lyricism of Pierre Emmanuel—compelling, modern, tending toward "correspondances." The beautiful passage (pp. 71-73) describing the solitary bridge at dusk as it suddenly becomes one with the firmament is a poetic expression not only of Déodat's suffering, but also of his true aspiration to Love. This passage is, it would seem, the heart of the thought of Pierre Emmanuel in much the same way that the curé's sermon in *Monsieur Ouine* is the heart of the thought of Georges Bernanos.

Amid the confusion of the notebook, where ordinary words no longer seem to mean what they ordinarily mean, the reader, irritated and disgusted, asks himself "Just how muddled can a person's thinking get?" (And he is by no means sure *who* is muddled—himself, Déodat, or the novelist.) Then comes Laurence's letter to Déodat written after she has read the grey notebook. It is in the light of this new document that the novel must be interpreted. Laurence—calm, intelligent, knowing Déodat *because she loves him*—unmasks the egotist. He has not loved anyone but himself. Their affair, at least in the beginning, was perfectly banal. The notebook is a lie from beginning to end. It has entrapped Déodat. He is now its victim. "Your God is not true either, Déodat."

Déodat, seeking desperately his own image and not knowing whether it is to be found in the grey notebook or in Laurence's letter, asks a friend to read both documents and judge between them. Fabien, who knows Déodat well, decides that Laurence is right: Déodat loves only himself. But he rejoices to find in the notebook proof of Déodat's "conversion"! His "evidence" is the lyricism and false sublimation found there. For Déodat, though he would deny it, bears the mark of his Jansenistic education. He holds the senses in horror and has always had a demoniacal desire to humiliate his body even by debauchery. It would appear that this Déodat had slipped into love without having time to analyze it—and kill it—before it could be born. Thus he discovered for the first time what Fabien and most persons without any mystical pretensions already know, namely, that love is good for man and that it is an analogy of God's love. And that knowledge in Déodat is clearly to the good.

The last part of the novel contains entries in Déodat's diary. He and Laurence meet in a Paris restaurant where they have a long conversation. The spell seems broken when he sees the real Laurence. It is the Laurence of his illusions that he loved. Or is it? She leaves him this time for good, beyond doubt convinced that he does not love her. She knows: "Car enfin je vous aime."

Déodat rejoins Eve, an opera singer, the "figure religieuse" of his life. Seeing her away from the lights and glamor of the capital, in the sea breezes of a

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Norman village, he loves and marries her. He writes to Fabien that he has found his center, his full unity as a person. He loves "as simply as he breathes—without thinking." But it seems to happen too fast. What should be "natural"—going to the market to buy lettuce, the last grapes of the season, a pat of fresh butter, a York ham; eating a simple meal in candle light; visiting the people of the village—seems too naive. For a divided person to be so hastily corralled into the fold of love is improbable.

For this reviewer the last letter of Déodat (written less than a month after an entry in which he admits that his heart is dry and his mouth like a clown's, all white with make-up, his mind a factory of illusions which devour one another) is just one more self-deception with variations this time on the theme of naturalness, freshness, everyday-ness ("le quotidien").

I have reviewed this novel at length for three reasons. First, it is a deep study of a person suffering from disaggregation and egotism, but at the same time reaching out for love and half-knowingly for Love—for something that can give him substance and a center within and relationships with the earth, with nature, but especially with others in charity—without. Second, it is the work of a serious artist who seems to have paid for such knowledge of modern dividedness by his own adolescent suffering (*Qui est cet homme ou Le singulier universel*, 1947). Third, it is, I am convinced, a novel that must be left closed by practically all non-Latins who have no professional reason for reading it. The sex experiences are too vivid and too prominent, the novelist's serious intention in writing them notwithstanding. If Pierre Emmanuel were doing this novel now—four years later—he probably would be less explicit and would go far beyond the mere sexual approach to unity. His psychological depth and lyricism give promise of an excellent novel in the future.

The College of St. Catherine

SISTER MARIE PHILIP, C.S.J.

Icon and Verb

The Verbal Icon: Studies in the Meaning of Poetry. By William K. Wimsatt, Jr.
University of Kentucky Press. \$4.00.

PROFESSOR Wimsatt of Yale University has for the past ten years or so written valuable essays in criticism. These have been scattered through the periodicals, learned and general, while his book-length performances have been devoted to Dr. Johnson. It is a good thing that he has now brought the former together between hard covers, for, apart from their individual worth, these essays present a unified front and are permeated with a single philosophy of criticism, rhetoric, and poetic.

The "New Criticism" has needed a skilled logician and a man schooled in philosophic thought. Wimsatt is such a man. Unlike the usual run of literary scholars, he is able to resist the temptation to avoid clear, logical thinking and take refuge in the nebulosities of "literary" discourse or descriptive historical scholarship. He knows what he is about. The discipline of his undergraduate classes in scholastic philosophy has not been lost under the overlay of graduate work. He has preserved his sense of the relevance of philosophic discourse to literature, and this faith has enabled him to apply his great energies to many

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important critical problems. Such mental labor is strenuous, and it does not always issue in products which the literary scholar can read any more easily than the layman, and which indeed he is wont to underrate as "critical" or "speculative" meditations of doubtful professional value.

Wimsatt stoutly opposes monism and expressionism, but he is equally averse to the neo-classic formalism (as it seems to him) of the "Chicago" school. Concern with the origins of the literary work of art and with the affective response of reader and audience are both suppressed in his criticism to make way for concern with the content and technique of the work itself, as he well outlines in his important "Introduction" and illustrates in such essays as "The Intentional Fallacy" and "The Affective Fallacy" (written in collaboration with Monroe K. Beardsley), and in the body of his stylistic and aesthetic studies.

Devoted to the premise that style is meaning (perhaps best expounded in the introductory chapter of his book on the prose style of Dr. Johnson), he yet distinguishes levels of meaning in a way to allow for a liberal attitude towards the mandarin elaboration of Romantic and Impressionist writing. If his bias seems to the present reviewer to be slightly towards a rationalistic view of literature and, despite demurrers (cf. "Poetry and Morals"), towards a humanistic philosophy, he is however, consciously concerned with vindicating the nature of literature as art, with such immunities as this attitude implies. "A verbal composition," he writes, "through being supercharged with significance, takes on something like the character of a stone statue or a porcelain vase. Through its meaning or meanings the poem *is*. It has an iconic solidity." And again:

Poetry approximates the intuitive sensuous condition of paint and music not only by being less verbal, less characteristic of verbal expression, but actually by being more than usually verbal, by being hyperv verbal.

In the essays delimiting the field of literary criticism in relation to the general philosophy of art ("The Domain of Criticism") and history ("History and Criticism"), the writer reveals himself as a sane and subtle dialectician. Insights like the following, for example, may seem elementary, but they are such perceptions as are given only to rarely lucid critics:

To understand the heroism of Shakespeare's Henry IV or the irony of Pope and Dryden we have to draw upon historical information and linguistic glosses. But we have to draw equally upon the modern world and our own experience. We find the meaning of heroism and of irony ultimately in the objects of our own experience and in our own minds.

Our judgments of the past cannot be discontinuous with our own experience or insulated from it. To evaluate the past we have to penetrate it with our own intelligence.

Some of the brightest essays in the volume are those dealing with rhyme, rhetoric, and verbal style. Of special interest to the serious critic and teacher is the final essay in the book, "Poetry and Christianity." The warning with which it closes may well be quoted *in extenso*:

It is only a little, if at all, unfair to this message [the message of the German romantic theorists and such writers as Matthew Arnold, to the effect that poetry is religion and religion poetry] to say that today what

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it amounts to is the intimation that we need more and better help from poetry in the practice of our 'private rituals,' that we need a new faith in myth—or even a new myth. . . . This is a message which represents a highly experimental state of mind—one which, having translated religion, government, and private ethics into myth, would reverse the translation with another myth—regain the heights with a balloon that is known to have a hole in it. They want a new myth when the main thing alleged against the old myth is that it *was* a myth. There was a time, a primitive and golden age, celebrated by earlier defenders of poetry, by Horace and Sir Philip Sidney, when poetry had great influence. . . . For if poetry then had influence, that was in part because poetry was more than poetry or was at least thought to be more. It was history and prophecy. And myth was more than myth. It was believed.

VICTOR M. HAMM

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